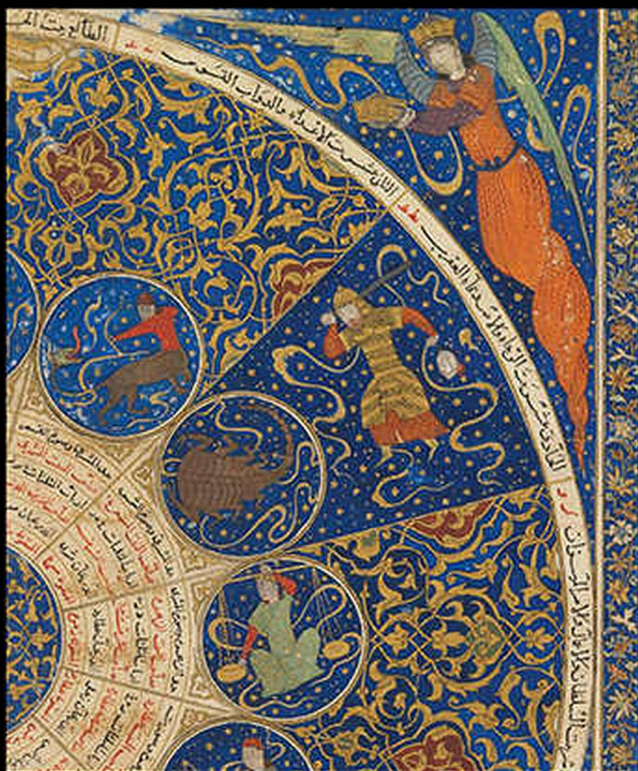


The Crisis of Kingship in Late Medieval Islam

Persian Emigres and the Making
of Ottoman Sovereignty

Christopher Markiewicz



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The Crisis of Kingship in Late Medieval Islam

In the early sixteenth century, the political landscape of West Asia was completely transformed: of the previous four major powers, only one – the Ottoman Empire – continued to exist. Ottoman survival was, in part, predicated on transition to a new mode of kingship, enabling its transformation from regional dynastic sultanate to empire of global stature.

In this book, Christopher Markiewicz uses as a departure point the life and thought of Idris Bidlisi (1457–1520), one of the most dynamic scholars and statesmen of the period. Through this examination, he highlights the series of ideological and administrative crises in the fifteenth-century sultanates of Islamic lands that gave rise to this new conception of kingship and became the basis for sovereign authority not only within the Ottoman Empire but also across other Muslim empires in the early modern period.

Christopher Markiewicz is Lecturer in Ottoman and Islamic History at the University of Birmingham. He was the Bennett Boskey Fellow in Extra-European History at Exeter College, Oxford between 2015 and 2017. In recognition of his research, he was awarded the Malcolm H. Kerr Dissertation Award by the Middle East Studies Association in 2016.

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The Crisis of Kingship in Late Medieval Islam

*Persian Emigres and the Making of
Ottoman Sovereignty*

CHRISTOPHER MARKIEWICZ

University of Birmingham



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom

One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA

477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia

314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre, New Delhi – 110025, India

79 Anson Road, #06-04/06, Singapore 079906

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www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781108492140

DOI: [10.1017/9781108684842](https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108684842)

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First published 2019

Printed in the United Kingdom by TJ International Ltd, Padstow Cornwall

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Markiewicz, Christopher, 1982- author.

Title: The crisis of kingship in late medieval Islam : Persian emigres and the making of Ottoman sovereignty / Christopher Markiewicz.

Other titles: Cambridge studies in Islamic civilization.

Description: Cambridge, United Kingdom : Cambridge University Press, 2019. |

Series: Cambridge studies in Islamic civilization | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2019013846 | ISBN 9781108492140 (hardback) |

ISBN 9781108710572 (pbk.)

Subjects: LCSH: Monarchy–Turkey. | Turkey–Politics and government. | Political science–Turkey–History–16th century. | İdris Bitlisi, -1520. | Sovereignty.

Classification: LCC JQ1806 .M37 2019 | DDC 320.956/0903–dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2019013846>

ISBN 978-1-108-49214-0 Hardback

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Acknowledgments

This book originated almost seven years ago in the early stages of a dissertation project. Since that time, the project has evolved considerably and I am indebted to a great many friends, colleagues, institutions, and funding bodies for the guidance and support they offered in many forms over these years.

In its disposition, range, and central concerns, the book owes a great deal to my teachers and advisors at the University of Chicago. I would like to thank especially the members of my dissertation committee, Cornell Fleischer, John Woods, Franklin Lewis, and Muzaffar Alam. My advisor, Cornell Fleischer, offered sage counsel and sincere encouragement on every aspect of this project from its initial inception as a dissertation proposal through the final finishing touches of the book. John Woods was no less a guiding influence on my trajectory as a scholar and the direction and scope of this project. In fact, his survey course on Islamic history, which I took as an undergraduate in 2003, motivated me to abandon European history and set out on my current path. Franklin Lewis suggested productively that I look for earlier iterations of the central conceptual terms discussed in this book, offered his patient expertise in my many challenges of adequately handling Persian poetry and prose, and opened my eyes to many aspects of literary production, patronage, language politics, and the construction of biographical sketches of literary personalities. Muzaffar Alam encouraged me to think about my project in a broad framework.

In my final year of doctoral studies, I went to Oxford and remained there for three years until summer 2017. Between 2014 and 2015, I held a

dissertation write-up fellowship from the IMPaCT Project funded by the European Research Council under the direction of Judith Pfeiffer, who, during the final stages of my dissertation, offered pointed advice on several aspects of my project. More than this, she fostered a sense of community among the members of the project. These members, Talal Al-Azem, Giovanni Martini, and Walter Young, were generous with their time and offered their insights and expertise. After graduating in 2015, a junior research fellowship at Exeter College afforded me the time and space to grow as a historian. Christina de Bellaigue, Andrea Ruddick, and Fara Dabhoiwala, the historians at Exeter during my time at the college, were inspirational in this wider growth and I thank them for their collegiality and encouragement. More generally, Hannah-Louise Clark, John-Paul Ghobrial, and Hussein Omar offered support, camaraderie, and advice during the two years that this book took shape.

During this long period of research, writing, and revision, a number of colleagues read my work or discussed with me aspects of it in great detail. The two anonymous readers offered many productive comments and a few criticisms that helped me sharpen and refine several aspects of the work, especially in the Introduction and Conclusion. Christine Woodhead generously agreed to read the entire manuscript and offered detailed and insightful comments, suggestions, and advice. Evrim Binbaş and Kaya Şahin discussed many aspects of the project along the way and offered their expertise on many levels. Tunç Şen and Helen Pfeifer each read portions of the manuscript and offered useful suggestions and needed encouragement. Throughout my years at Chicago, a great many friends and colleagues offered support in many forms. I would like to mention here Sabahat Adil, Nikolay Antov, Abdurrahman Atçıl, Mohamad Ballan, İpek Hüner Cora, Tolga Cora, Ferenc Csirkés, Carlos Grenier, Edmund Hayes, Alidost Numan, Tunç Şen, Carl Shook, and Sümeyye Yar. More recently, several colleagues at the University of Birmingham, especially Jakub Beneš, Ruth Macrides, and William Purkis, discussed with me aspects of the project or offered their level-headed advice when I needed it most.

The research for this project would not have been possible without the generous support of a Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Research Award, through which I studied and gathered materials in Istanbul from 2012 to 2013. During that year, I worked at many manuscript libraries and archives in the city. I would like to thank especially the staff of the Süleymaniye Library, who made working at this unmatched library one of the great pleasures of my research; Zeynep Atbaş and Sevda Ağca of the Topkapı Palace Museum, who graciously made available to me many

valuable manuscripts and documents from the palace archive and library; the staff of the Center for Islamic Studies (İSAM) in Üsküdar, the staff of the Atatürk Library in Istanbul, and the staff of the Ottoman Archives of the Office of the Prime Minister. More recently, Alpaslan Fener and Menderes Velioğlu, the director of the Süleymaniye Library, were instrumental in helping me secure permission to reproduce the manuscript images published in the book. In this regard, I would also like to thank Türkiye Yazmalar Kurumu Bakanlığı for permission to publish these images. I would also like to thank the Wellcome Collection for making freely available the cover image for this book. Half of Chapter 5 overlaps significantly with a journal article, “History as Science: The Fifteenth-Century Debate in Arabic and Persian,” previously published by the *Journal of Early Modern History* in 2017. I would like to thank Brill for permission to reproduce portions of this article here. I would also like to thank the editors at Cambridge University Press who supported this project. Maria Marsh expressed interest in the project from an early stage and offered support along the way, Natasha Whelan and Saritha Srinivasan smoothed many aspects of production, and Catherine Rae patiently offered her editorial expertise during a hectic period for me.

Last, I owe great thanks to my wife, Andrea, my son, Paul, and my daughter, Maria. All of you offered patience, love, and joy at every moment along the way. And Andrea, especially Andrea! A careful and thorough reader, a demanding and insightful critic, a patient and loving friend, and a full partner in all things always . . .

Note on Usage

Arabic and Persian terms, texts, and book titles that appear in the body of the text are fully transliterated following a slightly modified version of the *IJMES* transliteration system. No macrons or diacritics are included except for ‘*ayn* and medial and final *hamza*, which are indicated by ’ and ‘ respectively. Ottoman Turkish terms are rendered according to the principles of modern Turkish orthography, except that in these instances ‘*ayn* and *hamza* are indicated in the same manner as Arabic and Persian names and words. Arabic renderings are given in the text for terms that also appear in Persian and Ottoman Turkish (*mawlana*, *vali* ‘*ahd*), except for *kanun* and *kanunname*, which are rendered from Ottoman Turkish. Names and titles cited in footnotes and in the bibliography are fully transliterated with all macrons and diacritics according to the transliteration principles governing the language of that work. Terms that have entered regular English usage are translated (pasha, vizier, etc.), but more technical terms are maintained in transliterated and italicized forms (*waqf*, *shari‘a*).

Major toponyms are rendered in their established anglicized form whenever possible (Cairo, Konya, Isfahan, Herat, Euphrates, Oxus, and so forth). Minor place names are transliterated according to the principles of the language that predominated in the area (e.g., Suliqan, Marj Dabiq, Akşehir) and historical names are maintained, especially for places within the Republic of Turkey – so Amid, not Diyarbekir; Harput, not Elazığ; Ayntab, not Gaziantep. Similarly, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Syria indicate these historical regions and not the boundaries of modern nation-states.

With respect to names of individuals rendered in the Roman alphabet, this book draws similarly fine distinctions. Names of individuals generally follow the transliteration conventions of the language that predominated in their principal location of activity. Hence, although Turkic, names of Mamluks are transliterated using Arabic conventions (Qayitbay, Tumanbay). Names of individuals whose lives predominantly unfolded in an Ottoman context are rendered using the Ottoman Turkish principles applied to Turkish words (Mehmed, Mü'eyyedzade 'Abdurrahman Efendi). More problematic are individuals or groups who operated across vast terrains. In these cases, I have attempted to assess the formative sphere or primary area of activity of the individual or group and transliterate these names accordingly. Hence, Idris Bidlisi is rendered from Persian, but his son, who was largely raised within Ottoman domains is rendered from Ottoman Turkish (Ebu'l-Fazl Mehmed).

All names and titles of works are fully translated with macrons and diacritics in the footnotes and bibliography according to the transliteration principles of the language in which they were written. Dates are given in the Common Era unless the Hijri date is essential for the particular discussion.

Abbreviations

<i>b.</i>	bin (son of)
<i>BOA</i>	Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi
<i>BSOAS</i>	<i>Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies</i>
<i>D.</i>	defter
<i>DİA</i>	<i>Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi</i>
<i>E.</i>	evrak
<i>EI²</i>	<i>Encyclopaedia of Islam</i> , 2nd edition
<i>Elr</i>	<i>Encyclopaedia Iranica</i>
<i>HB</i>	Bidlisi, <i>Hasht bihisht</i> (Nuruosmaniye Ms. 3209)
<i>IJMES</i>	<i>International Journal of Middle East Studies</i>
<i>İÜ</i>	İstanbul Üniversitesi
<i>JEMH</i>	<i>Journal of Early Modern History</i>
<i>JESHO</i>	<i>Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient</i>
<i>JOS</i>	<i>Journal of Ottoman Studies</i>
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Turkish Studies</i>
<i>SK</i>	Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi
<i>TSMA</i>	Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Arşivi
<i>TSMK</i>	Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Kütüphanesi
<i>TTD</i>	Tapu Tahrir Defteri



MAP 0.1 West Asia in the late fifteenth century



Introduction

In the sixteenth century, Muslim rulers of the largest empires of West and South Asia all embraced a new vocabulary of sovereignty that supplemented traditional Perso-Islamic titles and concepts of rule. To be sure, the traditional nomenclature remained. The Ottoman sultan, the Safavid shah, and the Mughal padishah still frequently referred to themselves by titles with long histories in Islamic lands. In all cases, these titles were mutually intelligible across these empires and to a large extent interchangeable in Ottoman Istanbul, Safavid Qazvin or Isfahan, and Mughal Delhi or Fatehpur Sikri. That is to say, on the basis of a long-established and shared cultural heritage, sultan, shah, and padishah were all recognized and accepted markers of sovereignty across a wide expanse between the Balkans and Bengal.¹ Yet, in addition to these traditional titles of sovereign authority, alternative claims emerged prominently in the sixteenth century within these three Muslim polities. Such claims powerfully enhanced the older designations. They also often suggested a rationale for rule on a sacral or cosmic universal scale. These emperors were not just preeminent in their own domains, but became *sahib-qiran* (lord of the auspicious astral conjunction), *mujaddid* (centennial renewer of the faith), *khalifa-yi ilahi* (Vicegerent of God), and occasionally *mahdi-yi akhir-i zaman* (Harbinger of the End Time).

¹ Shahab Ahmed proposes the Balkans-to-Bengal complex to describe the common paradigm of Islamic life and thought that animated the eastern Islamic lands between the fourteenth and nineteenth centuries (Shahab Ahmed, *What Is Islam? The Importance of Being Islamic* [Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016], 73–85).

To explain the preponderance of this vocabulary, modern historians have pointed to the significant cosmic, sacral, or millenarian overtones of these titles and set them in relation to broader processes of heightened apocalyptic foreboding in the sixteenth century.² In most cases the new titles grounded their claims to authority in cosmological doctrines that anticipated the ordination of one individual to usher in a new era of universal justice, order, and peace. The claims were potent because they effectively articulated the aspirations of the three universal empires and they were plausible because, in the approach of the Hijri year 1000 (1591–2 CE), Muslim societies were primed and charged for great changes in the near future. At different moments and in response to varying, more immediate political concerns, rulers of all of these empires necessarily addressed apocalyptic anxieties, engaged millenarian discourses, and embraced radical expansive conceptions of their rule in the grandest of historical and cosmological terms.³ Beyond these specific anxieties of the tenth Hijri century, Ottoman, Safavid, Mughal, and, to a lesser extent, Uzbek pretensions to universal empire reflected the confidence of these Muslim polities in the sixteenth century. For much of this period, these empires, although frequently immersed in intense political competition and military confrontation with one another, offered a degree of stability in governance and relative peace within their own domains afforded through a continuity of administration over large territories throughout the century. In this regard, the justice and peace provided through their rule indicated plausibly the initiation of a new millennial political and spiritual dispensation in the approach of the year 1000.

² Cornell H. Fleischer, “The Lawgiver as Messiah: The Making of the Imperial Image in the Reign of Süleyman,” in *Soliman Le Magnifique et Son Temps, Actes Du Colloque de Paris. Galeries Nationales Du Grand Palais, 7–10 Mars 1990*, ed. Gilles Veinstein (Paris: La Documentation Française, 1992), 159–77; Sanjay Subrahmanyam, “Turning the Stones Over: Sixteenth-Century Millenarianism from the Tagus to the Ganges,” *Indian Economic & Social History Review* 40, 2 (2003): 129–61.

³ For an overview, see Matthew Melvin-Koushki, “Early Modern Islamic Empire,” in *The Wiley Blackwell History of Islam*, eds. Armando Salvatore et al. (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2018), 351–75; Cornell Fleischer, “Mahdi and Millennium: Messianic Dimensions in the Development of Ottoman Imperial Ideology,” in *The Great Ottoman-Turkish Civilization*, ed. Kemal Çiçek, vol. 3, (Ankara: Yeni Türkiye, 2000), 42–54; for more detailed studies, see Kathryn Babayan, *Mystics, Monarchs, and Messiahs: Cultural Landscapes of Early Modern Iran* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 295–437; A. Azfar Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign: Sacred Kingship and Sainthood in Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012).

THE CRISIS OF KINGSHIP IN THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY

This new dispensation for these four polities was, no doubt, enhanced by the stark contrast they presented with the turbulent political realities of the preceding century. The fifteenth century was the last of several centuries dominated by Turco-Mongol pastoralist politics and its uneasy tension with sedentary Islamic identities and modes of social organization. Such domination and tension in the central lands of Islam was initially precipitated by the invasions of the Seljuks from Central Asia in the eleventh century and exacerbated by the irruption of the Mongols in the thirteenth and the vast conquests of Timur (r. 1370–1405). Indeed, the life and career of Timur remained the primary point of ideological reference for all subsequent rulers of the fifteenth century, perhaps especially because the extent and impact of his conquests remained unparalleled over the course of the century. The fragile and ultimately fractured territory he bequeathed to his descendants was subjected to conquests, counter-conquests, and the rapid succession of rulers that seemed to perpetuate a state of instability in Iran and adjacent lands. Even in the last decades of the century, stability within and among the four principal sultanates of West Asia remained fleeting. Of these four powers – the Ottomans of the Balkans and Anatolia, the Mamluks of Syria and Egypt, the Aqqyunlu of western and central Iran, and Timur's descendants in eastern Iran and Transoxiana – only the Ottomans would survive and thrive beyond the second decade of the sixteenth century.

How, then, did this confident and expansive vision of kingship emerge in the sixteenth century? What were the conditions prevailing in this politically tumultuous, fractured world of the fifteenth century that made possible the emergence of territorially defined and ideologically assertive Muslim empires in the sixteenth century? In order to address these questions, we must immerse ourselves in the political, social, religious, and cultural contexts of the fifteenth century. Such contexts are challenging, not least, because they do not fit neatly into the historiographical categories in which historians most frequently work. These categories are informed by the legacies of the early modern Muslim empires and therefore focus upon modern notions of linguistic, religious, cultural, and national boundaries. Yet the fifteenth century was more than a period of messy transition to the more orderly and coherent geopolitical landscape of the sixteenth century.

Several of its features bear directly upon a new model of kingship articulated in the fifteenth century and more expansively realized in the

sixteenth. Many of these related to the social, intellectual, and religious developments attendant with the continuing growth of Islamic religious movements, especially those with a militant messianic cast, that prospered equally among urban, rural, and tribal elements of society across Islamic lands. Such movements included the far-flung Sufi networks that coalesced around nascent confraternities, such as the Mawlawiya, Naqshbandiya, and Khalwatiya.⁴ They also encompassed much more radical millenarian movements and included most prominently the insurrection of Shaykh Bedreddin in the Balkans and Anatolia, the Safavis in Azerbaijan and Anatolia, the Musha'sha' in Iraq and southern Iran, the Nurbakhshiya in northern and western Iran, and the Hurufis across much of West Asia.⁵ To varying degrees, both the emerging Sufi orders and the more radical millenarian movements drew upon the thought of the theosophical Sufi Ibn al-'Arabi (d. 1240). With few exceptions, they espoused a reverence for 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (d. 661), cousin and son-in-law of the prophet Muhammad and his first successor within Shi'i tradition, that promoted extreme concepts within some circles and, more generally, produced a confessional fluidity or ambiguity that blurred distinctions

⁴ On the emergence of these confraternities, see Jamil Abun-Nasr, *Muslim Communities of Grace: The Sufi Brotherhoods in Islamic Religious Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 79–143; for a critical assessment of the emergence of confraternities, see Devin DeWeese, “Spiritual Practice and Corporate Identity in Medieval Sufi Communities of Iran, Central Asia, and India: The Khalvatī/Ishqī/Shattārī Continuum,” in *Religion and Identity in South Asia and Beyond: Essays in Honor of Patrick Olivelle*, ed. Steven E. Lindquist (London: Anthem Press, 2011), 251–55; Nile Green, *Sufism: A Global History* (Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 125–32; on the Khalwatiya in the Ottoman context, see, for instance, Natalie Clayer, *Mystiques, état et société: Les Halvetis dans l'aire balkanique de la fin du XVe siècle à nos jours* (Leiden: Brill, 1994); John Curry, *The Transformation of Muslim Mystical Thought in the Ottoman Empire: The Rise of the Halveti Order, 1350–1750* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010).

⁵ For a brief survey of these movements, see Said Amir Arjomand, *The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam: Religion, Political Order, and Societal Change in Shi'ite Iran from the Beginning to 1890* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 66–84; on the wider religious climate that informed these movements, see Ahmet Karamustafa, *God's Unruly Friends: Dervish Groups in the Islamic Middle Periods, 1200–1550* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1994); Devin DeWeese, “Intercessory Claims of Şūfī Communities during the 14th and 15th Centuries: ‘Messianic’ Legitimizing Strategies on the Spectrum of Normativity,” in *Unity in Diversity: Mysticism, Messianism and the Construction of Religious Authority in Islam*, ed. Orkhan Mir-Kasimov (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 197–219; on Shaykh Bedreddin in particular, see Ahmet Yaşar Ocak, *Osmanlı Toplumunda Zındıklar ve Mülhidler*, expanded edition (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yur Yayınları, 2013), 159–235; Michel Balivet, *Islam mystique et révolution armée dans les Balkans ottomans: vie du Cheikh Bedreddin le “Hallâj des Turcs” (1358/59–1416)* (Istanbul: Editions Isis, 1995).

between Sunnis and Shi'is.⁶ Insofar as these movements embraced an overt political agenda, they constituted a threat to prevailing authorities. Equally, their intellectual production offered fertile material for new discourses on sovereignty, especially since they so frequently concerned how theosophical cosmologies came to bear upon the ordering of humankind and the world.

In the central lands of Islam – roughly the lands between the Nile and Oxus rivers – such intellectual production was frequently expressed in Persian. To be sure, Arabic still predominated as the universal language of scholarship – especially pertaining to religious learning – but Persian was used extensively or even preferred in other learned and literary forms, including Sufism, poetry, and history writing. Indeed, the prestige of Persian is evident within court culture, even among rulers whose native tongue was Turkish or whose subjects spoke Arabic. Throughout the fifteenth century, this court culture, including outside Iran, bore the imprint of the aesthetic and cultural sensibilities of Timurid courts, which, notwithstanding their political volatility, patronized art, architecture, poetry, and prose in brilliant fashion. These cultural products, in turn, circulated and shaped the aspirations and expectations of courts across a wide expanse. In this sense, the prestige of Persianate cultural products acted as an important binding agent for the broader, fractured political terrain of the period and facilitated the movement of religious and political ideas.

In these respects, the socioreligious and cultural features of Islamic lands in the fifteenth century constituted a challenge to the existing political order, yet offered it the appropriate conditions for a wide-ranging response or synthesis. This challenge and response renders the fifteenth century, in the estimation of John Woods, “an era of great experimentation and innovation in political thought and practice.”⁷ Such experimentation and innovation was undertaken in administrative and ideological spheres and ultimately informed the political context and intellectual basis for the innovative, yet widely deployed vocabulary of the sixteenth century.

The practice of politics in the fifteenth century was particularly fragile because sultanic courts with centralizing ambitions contended with entrenched societal elements that frequently opposed them. These

⁶ John E. Woods, *The Aqquyunlu: Clan, Confederation, Empire*, revised and expanded edition (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1999), 3–4.

⁷ *Ibid.*

elements, whether of the Turkic military or urban notable classes, were key to sultanic governance since they constituted the traditional backbone of sultanic authority in its military or fiscal-administrative forms. Generally, sultanic reliance on these classes was acknowledged and expressed through the complex arrangements by which sultans offered extensive financial privileges to these leading elements in exchange for military, administrative, and ideological support. The accumulation and consolidation of these privileges, which frequently assumed the form of significant tax exemptions on land, precipitated a reduction in the sources of revenue and in this manner undermined the ability of these polities to govern. In the latter half of the fifteenth century, all four of the major sultanates operated under the fiscal constraints imposed by these arrangements even as they sought ways to centralize their authority and administration. The tension, therefore, between these centralizing courts and the broader societal elements upon which they relied produced a number of political crises between the late 1460s and early 1490s within each of these sultanates, precipitated most immediately by their concerted efforts to undertake land tenure reforms and reappropriate the usufruct grants and religious endowments belonging to the military and urban notable classes. In all cases, the protests of the effected privileged parties prevailed – often with violent repercussions – and the central administrative reforms of the four sultanates stalled.

Equally, all polities in the fifteenth century strove to formulate a basis for political authority in the absence of any widely agreed-upon parameters for articulating legitimacy. This crisis of kingship, in fact, harkened back to the fall of the Abbasid Caliphate in 1258 and intensified after the dissolution of the Chinggisid Ilkhanate in the fourteenth century. Before these monumental events, universal political authority was derived largely from juridical and genealogical discourses that effectively buttressed the claims of Abbasid or Chinggisid royal claimants to universal rule. Since at least the eleventh century, Muslim jurists widely agreed that the office of caliph should remain the prerogative of a member of the Quraysh tribe of the prophet Muhammad.⁸ For as long as an Abbasid caliph lived, such a view posed no problems, and indeed, effectively buttressed the Abbasid caliph's claim to represent the Sunni community. The obliteration of the

⁸ There was, however, debate among jurists about whether such a prerogative was indispensable, see Patricia Crone, *God's Rule: Government and Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 224–25.

Abbasid Caliphate with the advent of the Mongols in the thirteenth century prompted a crisis among Muslim jurists, yet posed little concern for the Turko-Mongol military elites who dominated the central Islamic lands.⁹ For these elites, descent from the world-conqueror Chinggis Khan constituted the principal attribute of an effective claim to universal rule. Yet, by the middle of the fourteenth century, such prestige began to erode and with the dissolution of the Ilkhanid dynasty, no descendant of Chinggis Khan offered a viable bid for *de facto* rule. To be sure, in the post-Abbasid, post-Chinggisid world of the latter fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, Muslim jurists attempted to modify the legal arguments of their predecessors, yet no single argument was advanced to establish any broad consensus on the matter.¹⁰ Similarly, an alternative genealogical tradition emerged, especially among Ottoman and Aqquyunlu Turkmen rulers, rooted in Oğuz Turkic genealogical traditions, yet, here too, such discourses failed to resurrect the universal prestige that had accrued to members of the Quraysh in the era of the Abbasids or the offspring of Chinggis Khan during the heyday of the Ilkhanate in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.¹¹ Crucially, none of the principal rulers of the central Islamic lands, including the Ottomans, could claim credibly descent from the Quraysh or Chinggis Khan. For these reasons, the fifteenth century, perhaps especially with respect to political thought, constituted an extremely fluid period, one, in which, as Evrim Binbaş suggests, “established discursive forms and taxonomies lost their powers of persuasion” and rulers and ruled alike actively sought out and developed alternatives.¹²

⁹ Hüseyin Yılmaz, *Caliphate Redefined: The Mystical Turn in Ottoman Political Thought* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018), 1–4.

¹⁰ Post-Abbasid jurists developed a range of approaches to address the requirement for Qurayshi membership. On these approaches, see Ann K. S. Lambton, *State and Government in Medieval Islam: An Introduction to the Study of Islamic Political Theory: The Jurists* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), 138–51; Mona Hassan, *Longing for the Lost Caliphate: A Transregional History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016), 108–41.

¹¹ Barbara Flemming, “Political Genealogies in the Sixteenth Century,” *Journal of Ottoman Studies* 7–8 (1988): 123–37; John E. Woods, *The Timurid Dynasty*, Papers on Inner Asia; No. 14. Y (Bloomington: Indiana University, Research Institute for Inner Asian Studies, 1990). For a recent survey of the Oğuz narratives, see İlker Evrim Binbaş, “Oğuz Khan Narratives,” *Elr*.

¹² İlker Evrim Binbaş, *Intellectual Networks in Timurid Iran: Sharaf Al-Dīn ‘Alī Yazdī and the Islamic Republic of Letters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 20.

OTTOMAN SOVEREIGNTY BEFORE EMPIRE

Despite its isolated position at the margins of Islamic lands, the Ottoman Sultanate of this period was equally susceptible to these broader currents. Indeed, it is a central contention of this book that the Ottoman Sultanate, rather than being insulated from the principal anxieties of other fifteenth-century Muslim polities, necessarily operated within these same socio-religious and political constraints. For this reason then, the Ottoman adaptation and development of this vocabulary constitutes an illuminating expression of the broader phenomenon. Throughout the fifteenth century, and especially in its latter decades, by which point Ottoman sultans were increasingly drawn into political and military entanglements in Anatolia, the ramifications of the crisis of kingship played out increasingly within the Ottoman court and helped establish a new ideological trajectory for the sultanate into the sixteenth century.

To be sure, such a trajectory contrasted markedly with the salient and animating features of Ottoman sovereignty in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. During this period, the sultan and his sultanate's legitimacy was frequently construed in response to the geopolitical concerns of the more narrowly bounded territory of the sultanate in the Balkans and Anatolia. Over the first two hundred years of its existence, Ottoman sultans had personally led raids, campaigns, and conquests of non-Muslim territory in these lands that contributed to the greatest expansion of Islamic lands in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Such activities, referred to alternatively as *ghaza* or *jihad*, accrued significant esteem for the sultans, who frequently proclaimed their status as preeminent warriors of the faith (*sultan-i ghaziyan*, *sultan-i mujahidin*).¹³ In this regard, in 1453, when the Ottoman sultan Mehmed II (r. 1444–1446, 1451–1481) conquered Constantinople – capital of the eastern Roman Empire and subject of apocalyptic prophecy since the early days of Islam¹⁴ – contemporary sultanates across the Muslim world took note and in congratulatory

¹³ These activities and this image are reflected throughout the earliest Ottoman chronicles, see, for instance, Aşıkpaşazade, *Die Altosmanische Chronik Des 'Aşıkpaşazade*, ed. Friedrich Giese (Leipzig: Otto Harrassowitz, 1928).

¹⁴ Benjamin. Lellouch and Stefanos Yerasimos, *Les traditions apocalyptiques au tournant de la chute de Constantinople: Actes de la Table ronde d'Istanbul, 13–14 avril 1996* (Paris: Harmattan, 2000); Kaya Şahin, "Constantinople and the End Time: The Ottoman Conquest as a Portent of the Last Hour," *Journal of Early Modern History* 14, 4 (2010): 317–54.

missives affirmed the Ottoman sultan's status as a great warrior of the faith.¹⁵ This distinguishing attribute, therefore, can be said without exaggeration to constitute both the *raison d'être* of the sultanate, as well as a compelling component of its legitimating ideology.¹⁶

In addition to a *ghaza* ideology, the Ottoman Sultanate in the fifteenth century also bolstered its claims to rule, especially through chronicles, with reference to two other discourses. These discourses, which elaborated Ottoman connections to prominent Turkic lineages or historically verifiable legal arguments, sought to defend Ottoman expansion into Anatolia. In contrast to southeastern Europe, in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, Anatolia was governed by a number of Turkmen principalities that had emerged as successors to the Seljuk Sultanate during and after its gradual dissolution in the latter half of the thirteenth century. In reference principally to this political geography, one of these discourses focused on an Ottoman dynastic lineage that emphasized its superior status among the Turkmen principalities of the region, all of which claimed common descent from Oğuz Han, a mythic Turkic ruler.¹⁷ From the 1420s onwards, Ottoman chroniclers presented genealogies of the

¹⁵ Mamluk diplomatic correspondence to the Ottomans frequently acknowledged the Ottoman sultan's role in *ghaza*. Still, in Sultan Inal's reply to the Ottoman victory proclamation in 1453, the Mamluk sultan added the epithet *al-nasiri* (the victorious) to the long list of customary attributes associated with the Ottoman sovereign (Cihan Yüksel Muslu, *The Ottomans and the Mamluks: Imperial Diplomacy and Warfare in the Islamic World* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2014), 114).

¹⁶ Paul Wittek first presented the *ghaza* thesis as an explanation of the rise of the Ottoman Sultanate (*The Rise of the Ottoman Empire*, Royal Asiatic Society Monographs, vol. XXIII [London: The Royal Asiatic Society, 1938]); for a new edition of this work presented in the context of Wittek's other scholarship, see Paul Wittek, *The Rise of the Ottoman Empire: Studies in the History of Turkey, Thirteenth-Fifteenth Centuries*, ed. Colin Heywood, Royal Asiatic Society Books (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2012); for much of the twentieth century, the *ghaza* thesis was a major flashpoint for discussion of the rise of the Ottoman Sultanate. For a detailed summary of this scholarship, see Cemal Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds: The Construction of the Ottoman State* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 35–59; for the role of *ghaza* in the development of an Ottoman legitimating ideology, see Colin Imber, "Ideals and Legitimation in Early Ottoman History," in *Süleyman the Magnificent and His Age: The Ottoman Empire in the Early Modern World*, eds. Metin Kunt and Christine Woodhead (New York: Longman, 1995), 138–53; Colin Imber, "The Ottoman Dynastic Myth," *Turcica* 19 (1987): 7–27; Linda T. Darling, "Reformulating the Gazi Narrative: When Was the Ottoman State a Gazi State," *Turcica* 43 (2011): 13–53; for a recent appraisal of *ghaza* in relation to Ottoman political thought, see Marinos Sariyannis, *A History of Ottoman Political Thought up to the Early Nineteenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 29–39.

¹⁷ On the details and significance of this discourse, see Imber, "The Ottoman Dynastic Myth," 16–20; Imber, "Ideals and Legitimation in Early Ottoman History," 149–50.

Ottoman dynasty and suggested its superiority in relation to all other Turkmen royal families.¹⁸ The other legitimating discourse had much the same effect. Specifically, in parallel with Ottoman claims of esteemed lineage, Ottoman chroniclers in the fifteenth century also argued for its legitimacy to rule in Anatolia in consequence of its historically demonstrable status as the rightful heirs of the Seljuk Sultanate.¹⁹

Yet ultimately, these discourses proved insufficient and unsatisfactory on their own to explain and represent Ottoman sovereignty in the sixteenth century. For, in addition to expansion into Europe and Anatolia, in the last quarter of the fifteenth century, the Ottomans also expanded further eastward into traditionally Muslim territories. Between 1473 and 1516, the Ottomans went to war with the major powers in Arab and Persian lands four times. The last of these conflicts led to the incorporation of western Iran, Syria, Egypt, and the Hijaz into the Ottoman polity and greatly transformed the demographic and cultural profile of the sultanate. Over the course of these conflicts and in their immediate wake, a legitimating ideology of conquest based primarily upon *ghaza* or defended with reference to Oğuz heritage and Seljuk inheritance, was frequently irrelevant when articulated in reference to Muslim opponents and conquered subjects.²⁰ For instance, in 1472 in the midst of rising tensions with the Aqquyunlu Sultanate – admittedly a polity concerned with its Oğuz identity – one unnamed Aqquyunlu commander sent a letter to the Ottoman governor-general of Rumiya that acknowledged the Ottoman reputation for *ghaza* and suggested such efforts would be exercised best against unbelievers and not, as he anticipated, against fellow Muslims.²¹ Moreover, for this letter writer, the relevant historical

¹⁸ This is a feature of Ottoman historical narratives from the time of Murad II. For instance, see Yazıcızâde Ali, *Tevârîh-i âl-i Selçuk: (Oğuznâme-Selçuklu târihi): giriş, metin, dizin*, ed. Abdullah. Bakır (Istanbul: Çamlıca, 2009); or Neşri from later in the fifteenth century (Neşri, *Cihânnümâ: 6. Kısım: Osmanlı Tarihi [687–890/1288–1485]: Giriş, Metin, Kronoloji, Dizin, Tıpkıbasım*, ed. Necdet Öztürk [Istanbul: Çamlıca, 2008]).

¹⁹ Imber, “The Ottoman Dynastic Myth,” 13–15; Imber, “Ideals and Legitimation in Early Ottoman History,” 145–46.

²⁰ On this point in reference to *ghaza*, see Rhoads Murphey, *Exploring Ottoman Sovereignty: Tradition, Image, and Practice in the Ottoman Imperial Household, 1400–1800* (London: Continuum, 2008), 97.

²¹ In an effort to broker peace between Sultan Mehmed II and the Karamanids – a percolating conflict that contributed to the war between the Ottomans and Aqquyunlu in 1473 – the letter writer suggests that both parties concern themselves with *ghaza*. He continues: “The purpose of this wish is that no discord and chaos and opposition occur among Muslims and that the two sides engage in *ghaza*. Because it is a custom of that king (Mehmed II) from the time of his forebears, they have continuously been occupied with

touchstone in the Ottoman-Aqqyunlu conflict was neither Oğuz lineage nor Seljuk inheritance, but the more proximate legacy of Timur.²² Indeed, the bulk of the letter is devoted to detailing the Ottoman folly of any war with the Aqqyunlu sultan Uzun Hasan (r. 1457–1478), recipient of divine favor, who, through fourteen points enumerated in the letter is compared agreeably to Timur, world conqueror and vanquisher of the Ottomans. Certainly, Ottoman conflicts with other Muslims caused consternation within Ottoman ruling circles. The Ottoman war with the Mamluk Sultanate between 1485 and 1491 disquieted several of the leading Ottoman scholars of the day and prompted the ruler of Tunis to send an envoy to the Ottoman court in an effort to broker peace between the two leading Islamic polities.²³ Clearly, in these circumstances, a legitimating ideology and vision of rule based solely or even primarily on the Ottoman sultan's status as warrior of the faith, Oğuz descendant, or Seljuk heir failed to accommodate the increasingly complex terrain in which the Ottomans operated and exercised power.

In this sense, Ottoman expansion into traditionally Muslim territory and the broadening horizons and burgeoning self-confidence of the sultanate in the early sixteenth century helps explain the increased appeal and plausibility of the broadly resonating, yet relatively novel vocabulary of universal rule, construed as it was in sacred and cosmic terms. With the conquests in 1516–1517 of Syria, Egypt, and the Hijaz, including the holy cities of Mecca and Medina, Ottoman sultans came to rule the holiest and most prestigious lands of Islam. When coupled with their reputation as conquerors of vast non-Muslim domains in Europe, Ottoman sultans in the early sixteenth century were well positioned to ground their rule, not in genealogy or jurisprudence, but something altogether grander and more universalizing. But how precisely did this novel discourse on rule emerge in the fifteenth century and by what means did it come to be asserted not just by the Ottomans, but by all the major Muslim empires of the sixteenth century?

ghaza. Since our king (Uzun Hasan) was installed as sovereign protector (*parvardigar*) of the Turks, he, too, will busy himself with *ghaza*. And both of them should be brothers, TSMA E. 11602; Bekir Sıtkı Baykal, "Uzun Hasan'ın Osmanlılara karşı kat'i mücadele hazırlıkları ve Osmanlı Akkoyunlu harbinin başlaması," *Belleten* 21, 82 (1957): 261–84.

²² For an analysis of the letter, see Woods, *The Aqqyunlu*, 115.

²³ Idris Bidlisi, *HB*, 547a; Hoca Sadeddin, *Tâcü't-tevârih* (Istanbul: Tabhane-yi Âmire, 1279), 2:65; Shai Har-El, *Struggle for Domination in the Middle East: The Ottoman-Mamluk War, 1485–1491* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995), 205.

POLITICAL CULTURE AND INDIVIDUAL AGENCY

To answer these questions historians have focused on two interrelated phenomena. First, they have noted the intertwining of kingship and sainthood as a major and fundamental aspect of political culture in Islamic lands between the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries. In response to the challenges to universal authority posed by the dissolution of the Abbasid and Chinggisid dispensations, monarchs across the central lands of Islam sought to substantiate their right to rule by association with holy men, through whose miracles, prophecies, and divine grace a ruler's credentials might be burnished. Association with such holy men and their pious performances was appealing and powerful because it cut across all strata of society and was sensible and intelligible both in highly literate discourses, as well as in the performative – and therefore more accessible – representations of sovereign authority to wider publics. Yet more powerfully, in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, lines distinguishing sovereign and saint were frequently blurred. On the basis of their pious charisma, a number of Sufis, sages, and sayyids (descendants of the prophet Muhammad) claimed the mantle of temporal authority through the instigation of activist messianic movements that sought to overturn the existing political order and usher in a new age of justice and peace.²⁴ Conversely, over this same period, rulers experimented with and frequently drew directly upon the concepts of pious charisma, prophecy, and divine beneficence – all of which had been the purview of holy men – in the articulation of their own sovereign image and mode of kingship. In this manner, in the words of Azfar Moin, “in the post-Mongol centuries, the institution of kingship became locked in a mimetic embrace with the institution of sainthood.”²⁵ Moreover, insofar as the phenomenon was widespread and discernible throughout the central lands of Islam, it constituted a common pattern of kingship based clearly upon Sufi and millennial motifs.²⁶

Second, historians have explained this common pattern of kingship as part of a larger reflection of the connectedness that seems to characterize the expanding horizons and various integrations of Eurasia after Mongol

²⁴ For a detailed study of the leader of one such fifteenth-century messianic movement, see Shahzad Bashir, *Messianic Hopes and Mystical Visions: The Nūrbakshīyā between Medieval and Modern Islam*, Studies in Comparative Religion (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2003).

²⁵ Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign*, 5.

²⁶ Ibid 1.

hemispheric conquest and the world more broadly after European global exploration and expansion. From this perspective, Azfar Moin notes that the Safavid and Mughal imperial projects of the sixteenth century drew upon “a shared cultural context and learned from the other’s modes and methods.” Similarly, Erdem Çıpa argues persuasively that the imprint of such a shared cultural context should properly extend to the Ottomans.²⁷ In this regard, the role of the Ottoman sultan Selim I (r. 1512–1520) was axial, not only in setting the “political, religious, and cultural agenda of the Ottoman enterprise in the sixteenth century,” but in propelling “the complete integration of the Ottoman Empire into the early modern Eurasian political-cultural zone.”²⁸ Çıpa interprets the common “articulation of ideas on universal sovereignty and expressions of millenarian and messianic expectations” among the Ottomans, Safavids, and Mughals as a clear manifestation of the “connected histories” outlined and explored by Sanjay Subrahmanyam.²⁹

No doubt, these two interrelated phenomena contribute a great deal to the emergence and spread of this new vocabulary of sovereignty, yet they leave at least three sets of unanswered questions. The focus on kingship emphasizes the role of the king as a driver and shaper of political culture. The performative aspect of kingship insofar as it requires the active participation of a monarch in court ceremonial, public procession, or any other royal act suggests rather sensibly that the person of the monarch has a major role as an agent of political culture. In this manner, Selim’s reference to his military advisers and officers as “his Sufi disciples” clarifies his active role in the intertwining of kingship and sainthood.³⁰ Or, the Mughal ruler Humayun’s insistence on scheduling the official rhythms of his court according to the astral auspiciousness of each day of the week suggests a concerted effort to present his rule as a conscious and

²⁷ Fleischer, “The Lawgiver as Messiah”; Fleischer, “Mahdi and Millennium”; H. Erdem Çıpa, *The Making of Selim: Succession, Legitimacy, and Memory in the Early Modern Ottoman World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2017), 11–14.

²⁸ Çıpa, *The Making of Selim*, 12; here, Çıpa draws especially on Joseph Fletcher, “Integrative History: Parallels and Interconnections in the Early Modern Period 1500–1800,” *Journal of Turkish Studies* 9 (1985): 37–57; and Kaya Şahin, *Empire and Power in the Reign of Süleyman: Narrating the Sixteenth-Century Ottoman World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 6–11.

²⁹ Çıpa, *The Making of Selim*, 14; this approach was first outlined in Sanjay Subrahmanyam, “Connected Histories: Notes towards a Reconfiguration of Early Modern Eurasia,” *Modern Asian Studies* 31, 3 (1997): 735–62.

³⁰ Fleischer, “Lawgiver as Messiah,” 163.

conscientious reflection of a universal cosmic reality.³¹ Yet, such performances reflect a wider cultural climate. They exist within a range of possibilities that are not molded, defined, and bounded solely by the king. In fact, in many instances, the monarch may be entirely incidental to the expression of kingship, and therefore quite limited as an agent of political culture. So, what are the limits of a king's agency? Who are the other actors that helped suggest to Selim or Humayun the efficacy and desirability of their peculiar displays of sovereign authority? Focus on the monarch as the primary driver of a kingly image, instead of developing an understanding of political culture as "an activity shot through by willful action, power relations, struggle, contradiction, and change," tends toward a totalizing view of politics and power that obscures as much as it illuminates.³² To be sure, the recent work of historians on sixteenth-century Muslim kingship emphasizes the malleability of cultural meanings in a political context, but an emphasis on the activity and performances of the monarch overshadows the more complex processes by which a particular act suggests itself as potent or persuasive at any given time.

Separately, recent explanations of the new sixteenth-century vocabulary of sovereignty rest upon a reasonable and long-established understanding of Islamic lands as constituting a shared cultural space that facilitated the emergence of a common conception of rule among the three Muslim empires.³³ In this sense, widespread modes of association – such as Sufi networks – shared cultural priorities – such as the cultivation of Persian letters, and historical legacies – observable most clearly in the

³¹ Eva Orthmann, "Court Culture and Cosmology in the Mughal Empire: Humāyūn and the Foundations of the Dīn-i Ilāhī," in *Court Cultures in the Muslim World: Seventh to Nineteenth Centuries*, eds. Albrecht Fuess and Jan-Peter Hartung (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011), 202–20; Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign*, 116.

³² William H. Sewell, "The Concept(s) of Culture," in *Beyond the Cultural Turn: New Directions in the Study of Society and Culture*, eds. Victoria E. Bonnell, Lynn Hunt, and Richard Biernacki (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 44.

³³ A number of scholars have identified certain common features of this cultural space, beginning with Marshall G. S. Hodgson (*The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974], 2:1–368); Richard Eaton and Phillip Wagoner emphasize Persian culture in what they describe as the Persian Cosmopolis (Richard Maxwell Eaton and Phillip B. Wagoner, *Power, Memory, Architecture: Contested Sites on India's Deccan Plateau, 1300–1600* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2014], 20–27); Shahab Ahmed prefers a common paradigm of Islamic life and thought as opposed to any broad uniformity of cultural expression (Ahmed, *What Is Islam?*, 73–85); Stephen Dale notes the continuation of this space among the Ottomans, Safavids, and Mughals in what he calls the imperial cultural zone (Stephen Frederic Dale, *The Muslim Empires of the Ottomans, Safavids, and Mughals* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010], 3).

post-Mongol universalism embraced across eastern Islamic lands – lends assertions of a shared cultural space a certain concrete coherence in considerations of Muslim sovereignty. But the precise mechanisms that sustained these associations and legacies are often left unexamined in the context of political culture. Can a connected history lead to something more precise than an amorphous and pervasive climate of ideas observable through broad phenomena and shared across a wide space? What processes sustained such a shared culture? What were its limits and internal tensions? More generally, travel and focus upon intermediaries, go-betweens, and other unlikely individuals is a hallmark of much of the literature concerned with exploring and elucidating the connected histories of the early modern world.³⁴ Surprisingly, a similar emphasis on the movement of individuals and their capacity as conveyors and transformers of political ideas is largely absent. In short, because the empires shared a common cultural space, connections are assumed rather than demonstrated and explored.

Such a state of affairs is perhaps especially surprising since with respect to other aspects of late medieval and early modern Islamic history, travel, and the movement of people and ideas figures so prominently. For this period, the expanding yet still flexible affiliations created and sustained by Sufi networks facilitated the transmission of important spiritual practices, including the cultivation of spiritual lineages (*silsila*), the development of formal master-disciple (*pir – murid*) relationships, the veneration of saints' tombs, and the adoption of rituals particular to specific Sufi communities.³⁵ In parallel with these Sufi networks, especially with respect to the fifteenth century, recent work has begun to note the existence of important informal networks of intellectual affiliation distinct from traditional scholarly and Sufi circles across wide expanses of Islamic lands. This work, especially in the form proposed by Evrim Binbaş, draws inspiration from the seventeenth-century European Republic of Letters with its

³⁴ See, for example, Jonathan D. Spence, *The Question of Hu*, 1st edition (New York: Knopf, 1988); Natalie Zemon Davis, *Trickster Travels: A Sixteenth-Century Muslim between Worlds* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2006); Eric R. Dursteler, *Renegade Women: Gender, Identity, and Boundaries in the Early Modern Mediterranean* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011); Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Three Ways to Be Alien: Travails & Encounters in the Early Modern World* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2011); E. Natalie Rothman, *Brokering Empire: Trans-Imperial Subjects between Venice and Istanbul* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012).

³⁵ Shahzad Bashir, *Sufi Bodies: Religion and Society in Medieval Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 21–24; Green, *Sufism*, 71–124.

focus on informal ties and long-distance intellectual exchange cultivated through correspondence among intellectuals with similar philosophical, political, cultural, and aesthetic sensibilities.³⁶ With respect to fifteenth-century Islamic lands, a similar dynamic underpinned the writings and thought of scholars united through their interest in the occult science of letters as the epistemological underpinning of all bodies of knowledge.³⁷ Such esoteric ideas represented the cutting edge of scholarship in the fifteenth century, yet frequently their practitioners and promulgators worked at the margins of political life, or even completely removed from it. The existence and circulation of their ideas among intellectual circles of far-flung informal scholarly networks suggests an important process by which they spread across the central lands of Islam, but cannot explain how ideas on messianic, astral, or sacred kingship were reformulated, domesticated, and internalized as the basic building blocks upon which courts and their barebones bureaucracies defined and articulated a conception of rule. How, then, might we connect more concretely esoteric ideas and concepts that might have political potential with their subsequent widespread expression in courtly discourse – whether in the elaborately choreographed ceremonies and expertly crafted descriptions and depictions of sovereignty or in the more mundane, quotidian technologies of governance?

One of the problems with considering these questions concerns the varying and multiple scales of analysis required to address them effectively. On one level, the questions raised thus far suggest a near global scale: How did a specific vocabulary of sovereignty come to be shared over a relatively short period of time across a wide expanse between southeastern Europe and South and Central Asia? Focus therefore on the connective social and cultural phenomena that may have facilitated this movement seems entirely apposite, as is examination of specific rulers and courts. But this shift to narrower, analytically comprehensible scales entails still further problems, including in this case the limits of cultural connectedness and integration and the appropriate construing of individual agency. One way

³⁶ Binbaş, *Intellectual Networks in Timurid Iran*.

³⁷ Shahzad Bashir, *Fazlallah Astarabadi and the Hurufis* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2005); Cornell H. Fleischer, “Ancient Wisdom and New Science: Prophecies at the Ottoman Court in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries,” in *Falnama: The Book of Omens*, eds. Massumeh Farhad and Serpil Bağcı (London: Thames and Hudson, 2009), 232–43, 329–30; Matthew Melvin-Koushki, “The Occult Challenge to Messianism and Philosophy in Early Timurid Iran: Ibn Turka’s Lettrism as a New Metaphysics,” in *Unity in Diversity: Mysticism, Messianism and the Construction of Religious Authority in Islam*, ed. Orkhan Mir-Kasimov (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 247–76.

historians have dealt with this basic problem in other historiographical contexts is to acknowledge and embrace the utility of the individual as historical subject in the consideration of much broader questions. As Sanjay Subrahmanyam observed in his study of global cultural encounters, “the individual with his forensic characteristics is at one level the obvious and irreducible minimal unit for the historian of society.”³⁸ Yet in coming to embrace the utility of the individual, historians in recent decades have necessarily been forced to address the historiographical baggage of a nineteenth-century obsession with great men as drivers of change. Instead, they have tended to focus on the lived experience of “unknown” individuals, who for one reason or another have left a discernible (and illuminating) trace in the archival record. The approach shares much in common with microhistory and indeed, the gradual accumulation of global individual stories has been posited as a method to write the history of “our interconnected world, one story at a time.”³⁹ Sebouh Aslanian, drawing inspiration from Bernhard Struck, Kate Ferris, and Jacques Revel’s thinking on the problem of scale in transnational history, advocates such a micro-historical approach to global history for three methodological considerations that it is suited to address.⁴⁰ First, such an approach places actors and agency front and center and in this manner restores the human dimension to what otherwise are largely impersonal narratives – whether of global networks of material exchange and circulation or of an amorphous climate of ideas. Second, through examination of “unusually cosmopolitan individuals who led ‘global lives’ and on whom archival information happens to be abundant,” historians have a concrete method by which microanalysis of an individual in a global context illuminates unexamined aspects of broad imperial, commercial, and biological expansion, circulation, and integration. Related to this second point is a third. The concrete and close engagement with a life as reflected in an archival record permits historians “to fulfill the craft and ethic of their discipline” by adhering closely to their primary sources, even as they seek to address the grandest of historical questions.⁴¹

³⁸ Subrahmanyam, *Three Ways to Be Alien*, 2.

³⁹ Tonio Andrade, “A Chinese Farmer, Two African Boys, and a Warlord: Toward a Global Microhistory,” *Journal of World History* 21, 4 (2010): 574.

⁴⁰ Bernhard Struck, Kate Ferris, and Jacques Revel, “Introduction: Space and Scale in Transnational History,” *The International History Review* 33, 4 (2011): 577; see the remarks of Sebouh Aslanian in Sebouh David Aslanian et al., “AHR Conversation How Size Matters: The Question of Scale in History,” *The American Historical Review* 118, 5 (2013): 1431–72.

⁴¹ Aslanian et al., “AHR Conversation How Size Matters.”

Yet the sustained engagement with the fleeting images of a life afforded by patchy archival remnants raises another question of craft and ethic. A micro-historical approach, in its incomplete and instrumental examination of snippets of lived experience risks, in the words of John-Paul Ghobrial, “producing a set of caricatures, a chain of global lives whose individual contexts and idiosyncrasies dissolve easily into the ether of connectedness,” or are subsumed too fully into a neat (micro-/global-) historical narrative.⁴² To deal with this challenge, Ghobrial has proposed an approach that necessarily drags the historian back into the local contexts – and by extension we may add longer term historical developments – that informed, motivated, or restricted an individual’s activities and thought in the past. It is an approach that rests somewhere between micro-history and biography and it is one particularly well suited to the examination of political ideas in a broad historical context.⁴³ Ideas, perhaps especially political ideas, are as messy as the lives that give birth to them. As Zvi Ben-Dor Benite, Stefanos Geoulamos, and Nicole Jerr observe, sovereignty, and therefore kingship, are concepts “embedded within particular constellations of ideas, aesthetics, and practices”; rather than seek to disentangle these constellations, “the historian’s purpose is to display at a minute level these entanglements and their consequences.”⁴⁴ A self-consciously biographical approach allows us to explore kingship and the intellectual and cultural constellations in which it is formulated while still preserving the messiness of individual lived experience and the broader intellectual entanglements they produce.⁴⁵

⁴² John-Paul A. Ghobrial, “The Secret Life of Elias of Babylon and the Uses of Global Microhistory,” *Past and Present* 222, 1 (2014): 58–59.

⁴³ Jill Lepore, “Historians Who Love Too Much: Reflections on Microhistory and Biography,” *The Journal of American History* 88, 1 (2001): 129–44; on the relationship between microhistory and biography and the utility of biography to historical inquiry, see Giovanni Levi, “The Uses of Biography,” in *Theoretical Discussions of Biography: Approaches from History, Microhistory and Life Writing*, eds. Hans Renders and Binne de Haan, revised and augmented edition. (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 61–74.

⁴⁴ Zvi Ben-Dor Benite, Stefanos Geroulanos, and Nicole Jerr, eds. *The Scaffolding of Sovereignty: Global and Aesthetic Perspectives on the History of a Concept* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017), 12.

⁴⁵ For similar biographical approaches to Ottoman history, see, for example, Cornell Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual in the Ottoman Empire: the Historian Mustafa Ali (1541–1600)* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), Virginia Aksan, *An Ottoman Statesman in War and Peace: Ahmed Resmi Efendi, 1700–1783* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), and Ethan Menchinger, *The First of the Ottomans: The Intellectual History of Ahmed Vastif* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

HISTORY AND SOVEREIGNTY THROUGH THE LIFE OF IDRIS BIDLISI

In these senses, the life and thought of Idris Bidlisi offers just the sort of varied and rich view of a life immersed in scholarly and literary pursuits, susceptible to the demands of political activity, and filled with all the messiness and mystery of lived experience that add depth and nuance to consideration of the broader political, intellectual, and religious processes that shaped Islamic lands in the early sixteenth century. Examination of this life in these broader contexts constitutes the subject of Part I of this book. Indeed, the barest outline of Bidlisi's experiences addresses directly many of the themes outlined thus far; his birth, in 1457, within the reclusive messianic community of Muhammad Nurbakhsh in northern Iran, inaugurated a lifelong commitment to exploring the mystical realities that Bidlisi believed undergirded the order of the cosmos and ultimately informed his vision of man's role in the world. His education, principally under the guidance of his father, Husam al-Din 'Ali Bidlisi (d. 1504), formally initiated him in such explorations, but also brought him into direct contact with the leading Sufi and philosophical authorities of the day. As a young adult, he spurned his father's example of a godly life detached from worldly concerns and entered the court of the Aqqyunlu ruler Ya'qub in Tabriz. For the next twenty years, Bidlisi rose within the ranks of the Aqqyunlu chancery, in which capacity he crafted and composed sultanic missives and other documents that articulated and projected a commanding and divinely sanctioned image of the sultan. In middle age, he witnessed firsthand the political turmoil in his homeland in Iran that culminated in 1501 with the dissolution of the Aqqyunlu Sultanate and the political rise of a messianic figure, Shah Isma'il, whose radical program shook Bidlisi and prompted his migration to the Ottoman court of Bayezid II. There, he found an initially welcoming environment where he could flourish as a man of erudition and Persian belles lettres through the composition of a massive history of the Ottoman house entitled *Hasht bihisht* (*The Eight Paradises*) and a number of other scholarly works, political treatises, and panegyric poems dedicated to members of the dynasty and its leading statesmen. Slighted by the mixed reception of his history at court and frustrated by his subsequent marginalization, he flirted with the idea of reconciliation with Shah Isma'il and departed from Ottoman lands only to undertake the pilgrimage to Mecca. In his last years, he returned to the Ottoman court at the invitation of a new sultan, Selim, whose energetic reign included a major military confrontation with Shah Isma'il and the Ottoman conquests of western Iran, Syria, and Egypt

between 1514 and 1517, during which time, Bidlisi acted as Selim's ideologue, trusted adviser, and special envoy to the rulers of Kurdistan.

Even in this cursory form, Bidlisi's life appears to have run in tandem with many of the political, social, and intellectual currents that underlay the spread of the new vocabulary of sovereignty. Although not a monarch, Bidlisi was attached to courts for long stretches of his career and worked within them as secretary, historian, adviser, and envoy. In these capacities, he acted as both recipient and shaper of a political culture in flux in both the Aqquyunlu Sultanate of his youth and early adulthood and the Ottoman Sultanate from middle age onwards. Even so, focus on Bidlisi is not to suggest that his experiences were *sui generis* or even that his intellectual contribution was uniquely transformative. Rather, for reasons that I hope will become apparent in the following chapters, he was simply a more successful example of a more general type of scholar-secretary who helped shape and promote what became a broadly accepted vision of rule. The Aqquyunlu and Ottoman Sultanates did not arrive at similar conceptions of sovereignty because they shared broadly in some cultural climate. Rather, it was through the migration and activities of men like Bidlisi that the specific formulations of kingship circulated and were adapted to widening political contexts throughout the fifteenth century and into the sixteenth. It is through this migration – along with its resulting triumphs and frustrations – that Bidlisi's life offers a window to the precise mechanisms that sustained and bounded the expansive shared cultural complex within Islamic lands. By virtue of his talents and luck, he had a specific impact on the ideological discourse of the Ottoman Sultanate during a critical juncture in its history. His life, like any other, was marked both by triumphs and frustrations and the underlying social and cultural tendencies beneath them permit us to expose and examine the religious, linguistic, literary, and ideological contours of this complex, as well as the internal tensions that placed certain restraints on their expression.

Part II focuses upon these contours and Bidlisi's reflections on rule and governance principally through an examination of two interrelated aspects of his thought: his historiographical outlook and theory of kingship. Bidlisi's historical writing and thinking on sovereignty was conditioned by important new responses to the ideological crisis facing Islamic polities well before his birth. Most substantially, these responses were spurred by the career of the Turkic conqueror Timur and the competing legitimating claims of his descendants. By focusing on sovereignty, not as a function of jurisprudential reasoning or genealogical prestige, but as a consequence of cosmic and divine favor, scholars and secretaries working for Timur and his heirs began to

develop an effective new vocabulary of sovereignty that directly addressed the ideological challenges Islamic polities faced in the fifteenth century. These scholars and secretaries undergirded their new vocabulary and the claims of cosmic or divine favor that such vocabulary entailed with reference to mystical, astrological, and philosophical doctrines and theories. In this manner, they transformed discourses of sovereignty from the rather restrictive confines of legal discourse and genealogical elaboration to a dynamic discourse conversant with a wide range of epistemological traditions. Timurid courts embraced these discourses and their underlying epistemologies through expertly produced and delicately decorated works, including most lavishly the horoscope of Iskandar b. 'Umar-Shaykh (d. 1415), a detail of which adorns the cover of this book. As a consequence of the frequent dissolution and consolidation of powerful competing political courts across the central lands of Islam, these same scholars and secretaries regularly traveled from Herat to Constantinople and Cairo, where they found employment in chanceries or produced literary works, which in both cases afforded ample opportunity to deploy the Timurid vocabulary of sovereignty in ever wider contexts. Clearly, Bidlisi's activities and intellectual output are emblematic of this process; he began his career in the Aqqyunlu chancery and finished it as an adviser to the Ottoman sultan Selim. Significantly, he was also among a wider network of Persian émigré scholar-secretaries who arrived in Ottoman lands amidst the political turmoil in Iran in the waning of the fifteenth century and the onset of the sixteenth.

When Bidlisi began writing his massive history of the Ottomans at the beginning of the sixteenth century, he joined a debate about the meaning and purpose of history as a branch of knowledge that had unfolded between Arabophone and Persephone historians over the preceding century. Bidlisi's views on the central questions examined by these historians immediately informed how he wrote history and presented his ideas on rule. Significantly, Bidlisi understood history as the preeminent literary science, and as such, it should display the full range of rhetorical technique. In other words, it should draw upon the most varied sciences – whether religious, poetic, astrological, mystical, physiognomical, or philosophical – to embellish and substantiate historical narratives. For Bidlisi and many of his contemporaries, such narratives rightfully focus on lauding the good deeds of kings. More than empty praise, such encomia served a didactic purpose, since reading history encouraged good actions and habits while discouraging bad behavior. As a consequence of this view, history, for Bidlisi and his likeminded contemporaries, became the foremost mode for articulating and defining ideal kingship.

Not surprisingly, his discussions of sovereignty and ideal kingship substantively reference the Timurid vocabulary of sovereignty to which he was exposed as a young secretary working in the Aqquyunlu Sultanate. Like his immediate Timurid predecessors in the chancery, Bidlisi, through his several works on rule, referenced a wide range of epistemological traditions in his construction of a conception of kingship. Although he frequently deployed the Timurid vocabulary of sovereignty in his writings, he also advanced his own conception of kingship, which he called *khilafat-i rahmani* (the vicegerency of God). To be sure, like other Ottoman chroniclers of his day, he developed the themes of *ghaza*, Oğuz lineage, and Seljuk inheritance in his history, yet such themes cannot be said to constitute the principal thrust of his historical and ideological thought.⁴⁶ Instead, informed by his didactic and wide-ranging historiographical outlook, in *The Eight Paradises*, Bidlisi brought together the various epistemological strands to which he was most committed – astrological, mystical, and philosophical – and arrayed their doctrines and conclusions under the umbrella of *khilafat-i rahmani* to define a coherent vision of kingship embodied in the Ottoman sultans.

In some small measure, it is a credit to Bidlisi's talents as historian and rhetorician that such a vision of rule was taken on board by the Ottomans in the opening decades of the sixteenth century. Yet the deployment of a new vocabulary of sovereignty for the Ottomans was likely also an outgrowth of the Ottoman conquests of 1514–17. The adaptation of this innovate, yet broadly resonating vocabulary of sovereignty became an important part of the Ottoman ideological program to persuade predominantly large non-Turkic, Muslim populations in newly conquered regions of the suitability and righteousness of Ottoman rule. Articulated as the divine and cosmic favor shown the Ottoman sultans, yet manifested through their just and awesome actions as rulers, the new vocabulary of sovereignty became a discernible component of an Ottoman ideology of rule for much of the sixteenth century.

⁴⁶ Bidlisi principally addresses Oğuz lineage (24b, 27a) and the Seljuk inheritance (31b) in his discursive preface to the reign of 'Osman, Bidlisi, *HB*.

PART I

The Realm of Generation and Decay

Bidlisi in Iran, 1457–1502

During the first forty years of Idris Bidlisi's life, Persian lands suffered monumental geopolitical strains that profoundly affected his personal outlook and professional inclinations. During the period between his birth in 1457 and the end of the fifteenth century, Bidlisi's homeland in western Iran witnessed the rise and fall of a major Turkmen dynasty, the Bayandur clan of the Aqqyunlu confederation, the imperial aspirations of which were shortly followed within a matter of decades by a complete descent into chaos and disorder. The resounding success and subsequent unraveling of the Aqqyunlu experiment shaped the educational, social, and professional opportunities available to Bidlisi. Drawn by the cultural resplendence of the recently ascendant Aqqyunlu court, Bidlisi decided to enter sultanate service as a young man. His professional rise within the court seemed to reflect inversely the more general devolution of Aqqyunlu fortunes in the waning decades of the fifteenth century. By the late 1480s, as Bidlisi entered middle age, he had attained one of the highest offices of state, even as the political instability resulting from years of dynastic conflict and civil war brought the Aqqyunlu polity to the brink of destruction.

Despite this general context, the immediate circumstances of Bidlisi's birth and childhood would seem to have foreshadowed a far more reclusive life, somewhat insulated from political concerns and dominated by learned pursuits and mystical contemplation. Bidlisi was born into a family of scholars with close ties to one of the most important messianic-Sufi movements of the fifteenth century. Bidlisi's father, Husam al-Din 'Ali, was a disciple of the Sufi master and messianic figure Muhammad

Nurbakhsh at the time of his son's birth and spent the remainder of his life immersed in study. As Bidlisi's primary mentor and teacher, Husam al-Din 'Ali, and his learned friends and colleagues exercised an enormous influence on his son's earliest aspirations. The educational and mystical opportunities that this early upbringing offered seemed to preclude a life entangled with the worldly concerns of governance, court life, and political intrigue.

This tension between the call to a godly life and the draw of a courtly one, constituted the primary axis along which Bidlisi assessed his own character. The dichotomy between these personal expectations and professional pursuits also constitute the central organizing principle of this chapter, and indeed, inform the book as a whole. The first twenty years of Bidlisi's life were dominated by an educational upbringing that emphasized the importance of scholarly independence from worldly concerns. In the example of his father, as well as a number of the leading intellectual luminaries of the age, Bidlisi observed a scholarly disposition that at once welcomed the patronage of rulers, yet to some degree resisted close political associations that could erode intellectual independence and moral rectitude.¹

Bidlisi's entry into service for the Aqqyunlu sultan Ya'qub (r. 1478–90) consequently marked a decided rejection of his father's example. The second twenty years of Bidlisi's life, which were largely concerned with cultivating professional connections and securing political advancement in the Aqqyunlu chancery, highlight significant aspects of the ideological aspirations and administrative challenges faced by courts in Iran during these decades. Specifically, Bidlisi's activities in the Aqqyunlu chancery during this period reflect a number of broader developments within the polity. First, the ascendancy of the Bayandur dynasty under the leadership of Uzun Hasan facilitated a marked shift in the ideological trajectory of the Aqqyunlu court. The shift followed Uzun Hasan's rapid conquests of Qaraqyunlu territory in western Iran and Timurid lands in central Iran between 1467 and 1469. These conquests and the ideological shift they precipitated largely coincided with the Aqqyunlu appointment of several secretaries who had previously

¹ On this tension, see Franklin Lewis, "Sincerely Flattering Panegyrics: The Shrinking Ghaznavid Qasida," in *The Necklace of the Pleiades: Studies in Persian Literature Presented to Heshmat Moayyad on His 80th Birthday*, eds. Franklin Lewis, Sunil Sharma, and Heshmat Moayyad (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2010), 209–50.

worked for Uzun Hasan's defeated Qaraqyunlu and Timurid rivals. These secretaries infused Aqqyunlu chancery practice with the vocabulary of sovereignty employed by their former masters and, by extension, influenced Bidlisi's early chancery production. Second, even as the Aqqyunlu court developed increasingly sophisticated concepts to express its sovereignty, Ya'qub and the successive Aqqyunlu regimes necessarily grappled with the more basic tension of raising sufficient revenue to govern, even as they sought to secure the loyalty and cooperation of leading social elements through extensive grants of generous privileges and tax exemptions. The failure to sufficiently address this tension contributed to the instability of the 1490s and, in some measure, facilitated the complete dissolution of the Aqqyunlu political dispensation.

BIRTH BESIDE THE MAHDI

Writing in his late teens, Idris Bidlisi recorded his birth above a horoscope in the back of a notebook he kept for copying mathematical works of prominent scholars. The horoscope that Bidlisi referenced allowed him to present his birth using a number of dating systems: "The birth of the writer of this calendrical table, Idris ibn Mawlana Husam al-Din Bidlisi, fell on Tuesday evening 21 Safar 861 (18 January 1457) which corresponds to 15 Kanun al-akhir 1768, 28 Urdibihisht-i Qadim 826, and 13 Bahman-mah-i Jalali in Suliqan outside Rayy."² Next to this notice, Bidlisi explains that he copied this table from the horoscope prepared for his birth by Shah Qasim ibn al-Imam Muhammad Nurbakhsh (See Figure 1.1).³ Both Qasim, usually remembered as Qasim Fayzbakhsh, and his father Muhammad Nurbakhsh were the teachers and spiritual guides of Bidlisi's father Husam al-Din 'Ali.

Nurbakhsh was also one of several religious figures of the fifteenth century who led activist messianic movements that sought to reestablish

² Idris Bidlisi, *Majmū'a*, SK Ms. Ragıp Paşa 919, 221a.

³ The note states that the horoscope was "copied from the horoscope [prepared] by the hand of the caster of the horoscope, the refuge of sainthood and work house of wisdom Shah Qasim bin al-Imam Muhammad al-Nurbakhsh," Bidlisi, *Majmū'a*, Ragıp Paşa 919, 221a.

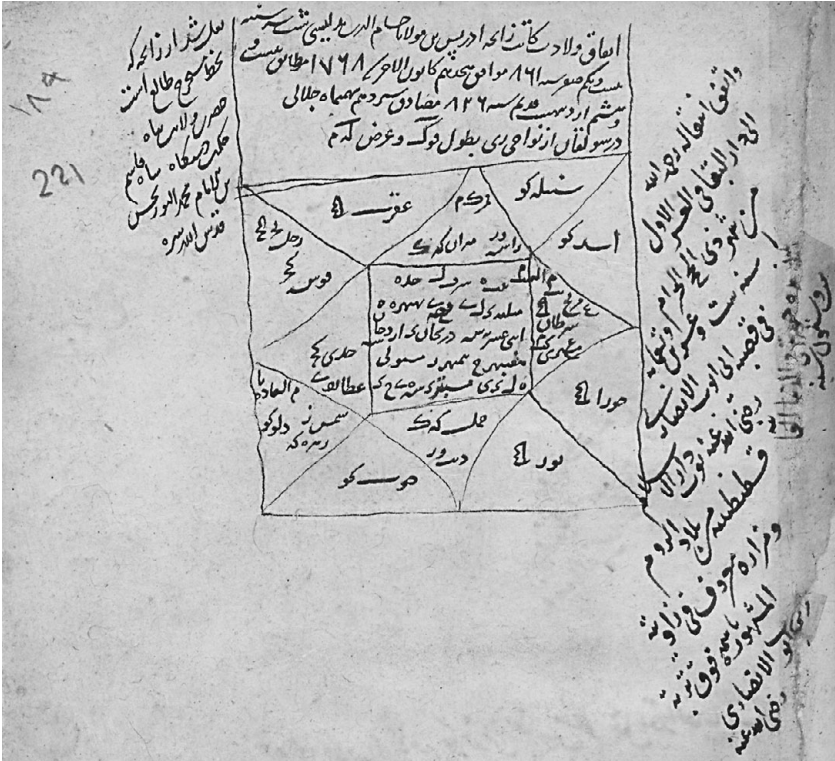


FIGURE 1.1 Horoscope of Bidlisi's birth produced by Shah Qasim Fayzbakhsh recorded by Bidlisi in his personal notebook as a teenager (Süleymaniye Library, Ragıp Paşa Ms. 919, 221a)

the political, social, and religious framework of their societies.⁴ While the particular claims of these movements varied, all of them were informed by a similar set of political, social, and intellectual shifts that affected Iran in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. While Bidlisi never overtly ascribed to the messianic mission of his father's spiritual guide, in later life, he necessarily grappled with the political and spiritual implications of his message as he sought to mold and articulate a coherent conception of rule among the Ottomans.

⁴ For a discussion of these movements, see Arjomand, *The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam*, 66–84.

On a political level, the initial devolution of Chinggisid authority with the death of the last Ilkhanid ruler Abu Sa'id in 1335 created a crisis of political authority within Persian lands. Up to that time, ruling dynasties in the central lands of Islam had administered their territories based upon their often tenuous claims to universal rulership substantiated with reference to prestigious lineages. Before the Ilkhanid dynasty ruled Iran, the five-hundred-year rule of the Abbasid caliphate, centered in Baghdad, was based upon its ties of kinship with the prophet Muhammad. This kinship, and the dynastic genealogy it eventually produced, formed the basis of the Abbasid caliph's *de jure* claims to sovereignty over all the lands of Islam, even during periods in which the *de facto* authority of the ruler did not extend far beyond the walls of Baghdad.⁵ While the destruction of the Abbasid caliphate at the hands of the Ilkhanids in 1258 created a crisis of political legitimacy in its own right, the universalist nature of the khan's claims to authority based upon descent from Chinggis Khan, in the very least, represented a continuity of notions of sovereignty in a broad sense.⁶ With the devolution of this new political dispensation less than one hundred years later, the societies of the central Islamic lands were well primed to identify what Shahzad Bashir describes as "alternative structures of legitimation undergirding the relationship between the rulers and the ruled."⁷ This search for alternative structures soon expressed itself in a number of popular religiopolitical movements that completely challenged traditional forms of temporal power.⁸

Yet this search for alternative structures can hardly explain why messianic claims resonated so broadly and deeply. The political shifts just outlined coincided with several social and intellectual developments that contributed to the appeal of messianic movements during this period.

⁵ For a general overview, see Hugh Kennedy, *The Prophet Muhammad and the Age of the Caliphates* (Harlow: Pearson Longman, 1986), 198–247; for the Buyid period, see John Donohue, *The Buwayhid Dynasty in Iraq* (Leiden: Brill, 2003); for the Seljuk period, see Vanessa Van Renterghem, "Controlling and Developing Baghdad: Caliphs, Sultans, and the Balance of Power in the Abbasid Capital," in *The Seljuqs: Politics, Society, and Culture*, eds. Christian Lange and Songul Mecit (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 117–38.

⁶ Michal Biran, "The Mongol Transformation: From Steppe to Eurasian Empire," *Medieval Encounters* 10, 1–3 (2004): 347; Peter B. Golden, "Imperial Ideology and the Sources of Political Unity among the Pre-Chinggisid Nomads of Western Eurasia," *Archivum Eurasie Medii Aevi* 2 (1982): 37–77; Jonathan Z. Brack, "Mediating Sacred Kingship: Conversion and Sovereignty in Mongol Iran" (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 2016), 7–8.

⁷ Shahzad Bashir, *Messianic Hopes and Mystical Visions*, 31.

⁸ The Sarbadars are an important example in this regard, see John Masson Smith, *The History of the Sarbadār Dynasty, 1336–1381 A.D. and Its Sources*. (The Hague: Mouton, 1970); Arjomand, *The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam*, 69–71.

Foremost among these was the early development of Sufi networks (s. *tariqa*) centered on the spiritual charisma of a master. While spiritual authority and charisma had long been a component of the master-novice relationship in Sufi circles, the thought of the theosophical Sufi Ibn al-'Arabi (d. 1240) reinforced and intensified ideas concerning the necessity of spiritual hierarchies as a precondition of cosmic order.⁹ The appeal of these concepts to societies in the midst of significant political upheaval aggrandized the position of the Sufi master as a pillar of the religious and social community he inhabited.¹⁰

Ambitious men in search of knowledge sought out charismatic spiritual guides, while rulers in search of legitimacy sought alliances with holy men either through offers of patronage or marriage alliances. Concurrent with these developments, and frequently overlaid with them, spiritual loyalty to 'Ali, the cousin and son-in-law of the prophet Muhammad and, for Shi'is, the first imam after Muhammad's death, emerged as a key feature of religious, social, and even political life.¹¹ While such loyalty was sometimes expressed in a formal avowal of Shiism, more frequently scholars, Sufis, and rulers embraced a fluid understanding of religious affiliation that formally espoused aspects of both Sunni and Shi'i positions. This fluid environment, unified by a broad and deep sense of Alid loyalty, has led a number of scholars to characterize the period as one of confessional ambiguity.¹² Indeed, such ambiguity is immediately apparent in the life and intellectual production of Bidlisi's father, who, despite his lifelong

⁹ For more on the centrality of spiritual hierarchy to the cosmic order, see Chapter 6.

¹⁰ Bashir, *Messianic Hopes and Mystical Visions*, 37; Lawrence Potter, "Sufis and Sultans in Post-Mongol Iran," *Iranian Studies* 27, 1 (1994), 77–102; Simon Digby, "The Sufi *Shaykh* and the Sultan: A Conflict of Claims to Authority in Medieval India," *Iran* 28 (1990): 71–81; Jürgen Paul, "Scheiche und Herrscher im Khanat Čagatay," *Der Islam* 67, 2 (1990): 270–321; for a view that emphasizes the religious authority of sultans, see Beatrice Manz, *Power, Politics, and Religion in Timurid Iran* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 190–98; for the Ottoman context, see Yilmaz, *Caliphate Redefined*, 113–44.

¹¹ On the status of 'Ali in political discourses, see Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign*, 41–46.

¹² John Woods first advanced the notion of confessional ambiguity between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries (Woods, *The Aqquyunlu*, 3–4); for a discussion in the context of the fourteenth century, see Judith Pfeiffer, "Confessional Ambiguity vs. Confessional Polarization: Politics and the Negotiation of Religious Boundaries in the Ilkhanate," in *Politics, Patronage, and the Transmission of Knowledge in 13th–15th Century Tabriz*, ed. Judith Pfeiffer (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 129–68; on the sixteenth century context, see Derin Terzioğlu, "How to Conceptualize Ottoman Sunnization: A Historiographical Discussion," *Turcica* 44 (2012), 301–38.

loyalty to a Shi'i spiritual master and descendant of 'Ali, wrote an extensive Quranic exegesis from a Sunni Shafi'i perspective.¹³

These broader social factors all likely contributed to Husam al-Din 'Ali's decision to join the messianic movement of Muhammad Nurbakhsh. By the time 'Ali joined Nurbakhsh in Suliqan in the 1450s, the movement already existed for approximately thirty years. Muhammad Nurbakhsh was born into a *sayyid* family that traced its lineage back to the imam Musa al-Kazim. As a young man, he joined the Kubraviya order under the spiritual guidance of Ishaq Khuttalani.¹⁴ Prompted by an interpretation of dreams he had experienced, as well as a number of significant astrological portents, Muhammad Nurbakhsh became convinced in 1423 that God had appointed him to herald in the End Times as the expected Mahdi. Although the most politically potent moment of his Mahdist movement was quickly quashed by the Timurid ruler Shahrukh, Nurbakhsh spent the next twenty years traveling throughout Iran while seeking to attract followers and avoid the attention of the Timurid authorities.¹⁵ When Shahrukh died in 1447, the threat of arrest and persecution was sufficiently removed to permit Nurbakhsh to settle permanently with his followers in the small village of Suliqan outside of Rayy. Between his settlement in Suliqan in 1447 and his death in 1464, Nurbakhsh devoted his attention to the instruction of his followers.

Bidlisi's father joined Muhammad Nurbakhsh by the mid-1450s during this more tempered and reclusive period of the Mahdi's mission. Nurbakhsh notes in a work dated to 1454–55 that Husam al-Din 'Ali came to Suliqan through the auspices of another disciple named Shihab al-Din Jurani (or Gurani).¹⁶ With Jurani's death, Husam al-Din 'Ali began to receive guidance directly from Muhammad Nurbakhsh, as well as lessons

¹³ Ḥusām al-Dīn 'Alī Bidlīsī, *Jāmi' al-tanwīl wa al-ta'wīl*, SK Ms. Şehid Ali Paşa 109.

¹⁴ On the Kubraviya order, see Marijan Molé, "Les kubrawiyya entre sunnisme et shi'isme," *Revue des Etudes Islamiques* 29 (1961): 61–142; Marijan Molé, "Profession de foi de deux Kubrawis: 'Alī Hamadānī et Muhammad Nūrbakhsh," *Bulletin D'études Orientales* 17 (1962 1961): 133–204; Devin DeWeese, "The Eclipse of the Kubrawīyah in Central Asia," *Iranian Studies* 21, 1/2 (1988): 45–83.

¹⁵ For details of Nurbakhsh's life, see Bashir, *Messianic Hopes and Mystical Visions*, 41–75.

¹⁶ Based upon Bashir's dating of *Risalat al-huda* to 1454–55 and the mention of Husam al-Din 'Ali as Nurbakhsh's disciple at the time of its composition, we can establish the *terminus ante quem* of 1454–55 for Husam al-Din 'Ali's arrival in Suliqan. It seems, though, that by this date Husam al-Din 'Ali was already well integrated into religious study at Suliqan, which perhaps suggests his arrival as some time earlier. For the rationale for the dating of *Risalat al-huda*, see *ibid.*, 68.

in the mathematical sciences from Nurbakhsh's son Qasim Fayzbakhsh.¹⁷ According to this work, Qasim was a particularly gifted scholar who had attained most of his knowledge through divine inspiration (*ladumi*), the proof of which was the astronomical table (*zij*) he created without the benefit of any organized study.¹⁸ As a consequence of this reputation, it is not altogether surprising that Husam al-Din 'Ali requested Qasim to prepare a horoscope for the birth of his son, Idris.

Despite these ties to Nurbakhsh, it is unclear the extent to which 'Ali accepted his master's messianic message. His choice to associate himself with the Nurbakhshi movement reflected his admiration of Nurbakhsh's qualities as a Sufi master rather than acceptance of his teacher's Mahdist claims. In an examination of Husam al-Din 'Ali's works, Shahzad Bashir has noticed "a dual emphasis on the glorification of 'Alī and exhortation of the unity of being (*vahdat al-vujūd*) that he may have carried forth from Nūrbakhsh himself."¹⁹ These emphases were also reflective of the broader climate in which mystical circles were dominated by discussions of Ibn al-'Arabi's thought, while embracing a strong sense of Alid loyalty. Husam al-Din 'Ali maintained a dedicated belief in the spiritual preeminence of the imams of Twelver Shiism, even as he downplayed Nurbakhsh's messianic claims. Such a belief is also reflected in the later work of Bidlisi, who describes Muhammad Nurbakhsh as "distinguished and unique *after* the twelve imams in the universal perfections of mankind."²⁰

If Husam al-Din 'Ali accepted his master's Mahdist claims while studying in Suliqan, his master's death before the complete realization of his messianic mission likely precipitated a crisis in 'Ali's worldview. Despite Nurbakhsh's preparations for his own death through the appointment of his son Qasim Fayzbakhsh as successor, the Mahdi's death on November 14, 1464 precipitated a major bifurcation among his disciples.²¹ While some of his most ardent followers remained in Suliqan under the guidance of Qasim's modified messianic doctrine, the great majority gradually abandoned the settlement and focused solely on their master's position as a gifted Sufi.²² Even if Husam al-Din 'Ali remained with his master until the end of his life, he certainly abandoned the messianic message shortly

¹⁷ Muḥammad Nūrbakhsh, *Risālat al-hudā*, SK Ms. Fatih 5367, 126a.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 119b.

¹⁹ Bashir, *Messianic Hopes and Mystical Visions*, 168.

²⁰ Bidlisi, *HB*, 346a.

²¹ Bashir, *Messianic Hopes and Mystical Visions*, 163.

²² *Ibid.*, 164.

thereafter, as within one year of Nurbakhsh's death, Husam al-Din 'Ali was back in Bidlis, the city of his forebears.²³

CHILDHOOD AND EDUCATION

Following the move to Bidlis, Idris' early childhood unfolded against the backdrop of major political shifts and realignments in western Iran that affected his father's professional and political associations. Husam al-Din 'Ali's decision to abandon the Nurbakhshi enclave at Suliquan and return to his hometown occurred on the eve of a major military confrontation between the two most important Turkmen tribal confederations in western Iran. Since Timur's death in 1405, western Iran had been divided and controlled by the confederate clans of the Aqquyunlu and Qaraqayunlu Turkmen.²⁴ The Aqquyunlu had been granted territories by Timur in Diyarbakr and Armenia, while the Qaraqayunlu eventually wrested control of Azerbaijan, 'Iraq-i 'Arab, and 'Iraq-i 'Ajam from Timur's son Shahrukh. While the first half of the fifteenth century was marked by a number of military conflicts between the Qaraqayunlu confederation and Shahrukh and his Aqquyunlu allies, these three polities grudgingly established a geopolitical equilibrium that divided control of western Iran along a border west of the Lake Van region.

The consolidation of power by the Aqquyunlu ruler Uzun Hasan and his Qaraqayunlu counterpart Jahanshah in the 1460s created a hostile political environment for the region. This situation reached a breaking point in 1467 when Jahanshah, at the head of the Qaraqayunlu forces, entered the Aqquyunlu territory of Armenia. The ensuing conflict that unfolded over the following two years would see the complete elimination of the Qaraqayunlu confederation as a political force and the emergence of Uzun Hasan as the sole master of western and central Iran.

Husam al-Din 'Ali's arrival in Bidlis some time before this conflict suggests an affiliation with the Qaraqayunlu confederate clans. Since the fourteenth century, the city had been ruled by the chiefs of the Ruzhaki Kurdish tribes who had proffered their allegiance to the Qaraqayunlu

²³ In 1466, Husam al-Din 'Ali established an endowment in Bidlis, BOA, TTD 413, p. 216.

²⁴ On the Aqquyunlu-Qaraqayunlu rivalry, see John E. Woods, *The Aqquyunlu*, 44–54; İsmail Aka, *İran'da Türkmen hakimiyeti: Kara Koyunlular devri* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2001).

rulers to the east.²⁵ The Kurdish rulers of Bidlis fought alongside the Qaraqyunlu confederation until the bitter end and, as a consequence, Uzun Hasan replaced the local Kurdish lords of Bidlis and established a direct Aqqyunlu administration in the city, which lasted for twenty years. Yet, Husam al-Din 'Ali's return to his ancestral home in 1465, two years before this conflict, reflects his close ties with the Ruzhaki Kurdish lords in control of the city. Indeed, 'Ali's co-establishment of a charitable foundation (*waqf*) in Bidlis in the year he returned home further substantiates this point, for his partner in the endeavor was Amir Sharaf, the Ruzhaki ruler of the city.²⁶

Despite his association with the Ruzhaki Kurdish rulers of Bidlis and their nominal Qaraqyunlu lords, Husam al-Din 'Ali negotiated the treacherous political terrain of this period remarkably well. In his capacity as an ally of Amir Sharaf, both Husam al-Din 'Ali and his ten-year-old son Idris accompanied the Ruzhaki Kurds when they joined their Qaraqyunlu allies in campaign against the Aqqyunlu in 1467. Years later, Bidlisi recollected the campaign and affirmed his firsthand witnessing of Uzun Hasan's defeat of his Qaraqyunlu rival at Muş.²⁷ Despite Husam al-Din 'Ali's connections to the Ruzhaki and Qaraqyunlu, Uzun Hasan favored Husam al-Din 'Ali as an honored scholar and from this point forward both 'Ali and later his son found a place in the Aqqyunlu court.

Despite his birth in Suliqan, Bidlisi came from a distinguished family of learned men associated with the city of Bidlis for at least three generations.²⁸ While Idris passed the vast majority of his life outside of Bidlis, he clearly maintained important ties to his family's homeland, as he, like his father, also established a charitable foundation in the city upon

²⁵ On the Ruzhaki rulers of Bidlis, see Sharaf Khān Bidlīsī, *Schéref-Nâmeḥ: ou Histoire des Kourdes*, ed. Vladimir Vladimirovich Véliaminov-Zernov (Westmead: Gregg International, 1969), 1:357–446.

²⁶ BOA TTD 413, p. 216.

²⁷ Bidlīsī, *HB*, 346a.

²⁸ According to a note added to an Ottoman cadastral survey of Bidlis, Idris' grandfather was Taj al-Din Haji Husayn ibn Mawlana Majd al-Din al-Bidlisi (spelled Bitlisi in the mid-sixteenth-century Ottoman document). This would suggest that the family's connection to Bidlis extends at least as far as Idris' paternal great-grandfather. The note was included in the register to indicate that Idris Bidlisi's son Ebu'l-Fazl Mehmed, who at that time was serving as the chief finance officer (*defterdar*) of Rumili, assumed control of the endowment, TTD 413, p. 216.

his return to the region in the service of the Ottomans in 1515.²⁹ Indeed, Bidlisi's return was instigated through Sultan Selim's appointment of him to recruit Kurdish support in the Ottoman struggle against Shah Isma'īl, in light of his ties of "lineage and association" with the local Kurdish military elite and urban notables.³⁰

While this lineage and association suggests a Kurdish ethnicity for Bidlisi, such an identity must be understood in terms of the stronger professional and scholarly ties through which he constructed his worldview. Such professional and scholarly commitments stressed the social dimensions of identity. Accordingly, Bidlisi viewed himself and the groups around him through the contrasting identities of *Türk u Tajik*, which by the middle of the fifteenth century had come to represent the social and political differences between military elites (*Turks*) and urban notables (*Tajiks*) and not necessarily any marker of ethnic background.³¹ In the particular Aqqyunlu context in which Bidlisi spent the first two-thirds of his life, such distinctions between the ostensibly nomadic military elite ("Turk"), whether ethnically Turkish, Kurdish, or Iranian, and the sedentary urban and rural segments of society ("Tajik") were a reality of life that affected the professional options and general outlooks of all members of society. In such a social space, Bidlisi is unlikely to have embraced a discernible Kurdish identity in the place of a self-conception informed by his personal and professional ties to the urban notable class.³²

The almost exclusive use of Persian or Arabic as the languages of literary expression and daily use constituted one of the key features of the Persian urban notable class to which Bidlisi belonged in his youth. Despite decades of service at the courts of Turkish rulers, he composed all of his literary works in either Persian or Arabic. If he knew Turkish as a

²⁹ Ibid.; Rahmi Tekin, "Medrese-yi İdrisiyye," *A.Ü. Türkiyat Araştırmaları Enstitüsü Dergisi* 40 (2009): 233–46.

³⁰ Bidlisi characterizes Selim's decision to appoint him based upon ties of lineage and association (*bar-hasb-i 'irs va iktisab ba in banda-yi asghar dar kamal-i intisab bud*), Idrīs Bidlīsī. *Salīmshāhnāma*, TSMK Ms. Emanet Hazinesi 1423, 119b.

³¹ B. G. Fragner, "Tādjik" *EF*².

³² For a discussion of the facets of identity among inhabitants – Turkmen and Kurdish nomads and urban Muslims, among others – of the Ottoman province of Aintab, see Leslie Peirce, *Morality Tales: Law and Gender in the Ottoman Court of Aintab* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 60–66. For a more general discussion of aspects of Ottoman identity, see Christine Isom-Verhaaren and Kent F. Schull, "Introduction" in *Living in the Ottoman Realm: Empire and Identity, 13th to 20th Centuries*, eds. Christine Isom-Verhaaren and Kent F. Schull (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016), 1–6.

language of oral communication, he rarely used it as a mode of written correspondence.³³ This stark linguistic division between members of the military ruling class and urban notables who filled the ranks of their chanceries formed a discernible aspect of the administrative approach of most polities in the central lands of Islam during this period.³⁴ This linguistic division highlights another, in this case professional, cleavage that informed Bidlisi's identity. The administrative divisions between the men of the sword (*ahl-i sayf*) and the men of the pen (*ahl-i qalam*) generally fell along the same axes as the broader social categories of *Türk u Tajik*. Such divisions informed appointments to office: Men of the sword occupied military offices and governorships and certain positions at court, while men of the pen filled the ranks of the secretarial services and religious institutions.³⁵ These divisions reinforced Bidlisi's pride in his expressive aptitude in Persian. After all, his position at court was predicated on his ability to produce elegant Persian prose and verse as much as on his erudition in other fields of learning. Such an outlook explains his later dismissal of Ottoman histories written in Turkish as unworthy of the subject and the palpable conceit with which he presents his own work on the same subject in Persian.³⁶

As a consequence of these social and professional cleavages, Bidlisi's membership in the urban notable estate in Persian lands necessitated a distinct educational program that would facilitate his entry onto an appropriate professional path. Although the trajectory of his studies followed a normal curriculum, his father's position as a well-respected scholar in Tabriz, one of the major Islamic centers of learning, afforded Bidlisi the opportunity to study with some of the great luminaries of the fifteenth century. Despite this exposure, the vast majority of Bidlisi's studies unfolded under the personal supervision of his father. In several places in his later writings, he references the profound influence of his father as a

³³ For instance, all of the extant letters in Bidlisi's hand addressed to Selim are written in Persian. See TSMA E. 1019, E. 5675, E. 8333 (1–3). Abdülkadir Özcan suggests that Bidlisi also composed in Turkish on the basis of a sixteenth-century prose collection compiled after his death, but the attribution of these letters to him may be an error of the copyist, Abdülkadir Özcan, "İdris-i Bitlisi," *DİA*.

³⁴ Woods, *The Aqqayunlu*, 16–17; Willem M. Floor, *Safavid Government Institutions* (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 2001).

³⁵ In Timurid courts such divisions even were expressed in the establishment of two separate princely councils, the *divan-i 'umara/Türk divanı* and the *divan-i tajikan/sart divanı*, B. G. Fragner, "Tādjik" *El*².

³⁶ Bidlisi, *HB*, 8a.

teacher whom he viewed as a master of both the exoteric and esoteric sciences.³⁷ Indeed, Husam al-Din 'Ali's scholarly production in his later life demonstrates his facility with traditional religious sciences as well as a wide range of mystical concepts. In the 1490s, he finished a four-volume exegesis of the Quran indebted largely to the widely emulated work of the great thirteenth-century Shafi'i scholar Nasir al-Din Bayzavi (d. 1286).³⁸ With respect to mystical thought, 'Ali composed a number of commentaries on the mystical teachings of Sufis such as Ibn al-'Arabi, 'Abd al-Razzaq Kashani (d. 1335), and Mahmud Shabistari (d. 1320).³⁹ Sufism was clearly Husam al-Din's major interest, for in addition to these commentaries, he also composed a number of original works.⁴⁰

As with all students, young Idris' studies began with an examination of the exoteric sciences, including mastery of Quran reading (*qira'a*), the traditions of the prophet (*hadith*), exegesis (*tafsir*), jurisprudence (*fiqh*), and theology (*kalam*).⁴¹ Bidlisi's first forays into Sufism also occurred under the supervision of his father. In the preface to Bidlisi's own commentary on Mahmud Shabistari's *Kitab haqq al-yaqin* (*Book of the Truth of Certainty*), he writes that his early studies in Sufism began in 1471 at the age of approximately fourteen: "While inflamed by learned discussions and philosophical effusions through the fortunate attention and generous tenderness of my saintly father . . . I was becoming familiar with mystical gnosis and, in its verification, became enamored of the divinely inspired

³⁷ Preface to Hashiya 'ala anwar al-tanzil (Bidlisi, *Haqq al-mubin fi sharh risalat haqq al-yaqin*, SK Ms. Ayasofya 2338, 3a). Bidlisi also compliments his father's scholarly erudition in the preface to *Hashiya 'ala anwar al-tanzil*, one copy of which he presented to Sultan Bayezid II in his first years among the Ottomans, Idris Bidlisi, *Hāshīya 'alā anwār al-tanzīl*, SK, Ayasofya 303–M.

³⁸ Hüsām al-Dīn 'Alī Bidlīsī, *Jāmi' al-tanzīl wa'l-ta'wīl*. SK Ms. Şehid Ali Paşa 109–12. For reference to Husam al-Din 'Ali's teachers and sources of influence, see Hüsām al-Dīn 'Alī Bidlīsī, *Jāmi' al-tanzīl wa'l-ta'wīl*, SK Ms. Şehid Ali Paşa 109, 2b.

³⁹ For his supercommentary on Kashani's commentary of Ibn al-'Arabi's *Istilahat al-sufiyya*, see Hüsām al-Dīn 'Alī Bidlīsī, *Sharḥ iştilahāt al-şūfiyya*, Manisa İl Halk Kütüphanesi, Ms. 1134; for his commentary on Shabistari's *Gulshan-i raz*, see *Sharḥ-i gulshan-i rāz*, Antalya İl Halk Kütüphanesi, Ms. 164. This work is mentioned by Bidlisi in his own commentary on Shabistari's *Haqq al-yaqin* entitled *Haqq al-mubin fi sharḥ risalat haqq al-yaqin*; Idris Bidlisi, *Haqq al-mubīn*, 3a/b.

⁴⁰ Tahsin Yazıcı, "Hüsām-al-Dīn 'Alī Bedlīsī," *Elr*.

⁴¹ For a discussion of a student's curriculum in fifteenth-century eastern Iran, see Maria Eva Subtelny and Anas B. Khalidov, "The Curriculum of Islamic Higher Learning in Timurid Iran in the Light of the Sunni Revival under Shāh-Rukh," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 115, 2 (April 1, 1995): 210–36. On Bidlisi's chains of transmission (*isnad*) for *hadith*, see Christopher Markiewicz, "The Crisis of Rule," 36.

realities.”⁴² In this exploration of esoteric matters, Bidlisi notes that he was aided by two of the works of Mahmud Shabistari, *Gulshan-i raz* (*The Mystic Rose Garden*) and *The Truth of Certainty*. *The Mystic Rose Garden*’s breadth of subject yet relative concision, which Bidlisi likens to “the launch perch of the views of that high-flying falcon [Shabistari],”⁴³ made the work a popular starting point for students of Sufism.⁴⁴ Bidlisi’s examination of these texts unfolded through the careful guidance of his father, who at that time decided to write a commentary on *The Mystic Rose Garden*. This close collaboration between father and son was a common feature of all of Bidlisi’s education and is evidenced by one copy of Husam al-Din ‘Ali’s *Kanz al-khafi fi bayan maqamat al-Sufi* (*Hidden Treasures in the Explanation of the Sufi’s Stations*) copied by Idris at the age of nineteen.⁴⁵ In addition to these studies in the religious sciences, Bidlisi, like his father, also developed an interest in the mathematical sciences. Around 1472 he produced a notebook that contained a number of important treatises on various mathematical sciences, including accounting, music, and astronomy.⁴⁶ Bidlisi’s interest in knowledge of the heavens remained a discernible aspect of his intellectual curiosity throughout his life.

Bidlisi’s education – whether under the supervision of his father or self-directed – largely occurred in and around Tabriz. During his childhood in the reign of Uzun Hasan, Tabriz enjoyed a vibrant cultural and intellectual resurgence.⁴⁷ As the Aqquyunlu Sultanate under Uzun Hasan relied on the ideological and spiritual support of the learned classes to buttress its legitimating claims to political authority, the sultan actively supported scholars through land grants and special tax privileges offered to learned men, as well as generous sponsorship of individual scholarly works.⁴⁸ Husam al-Din ‘Ali’s position at the court in Tabriz resulted from this patronage. In addition to scholars who permanently resided in the city,

⁴² Bidlīsī, *Ḥaqq al-mubīn*, 3a.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ J. T. P. de Bruijn, “Maḥmūd Shabistārī,” *EL*².

⁴⁵ For Bidlisi’s colophon dated 1474 and appended to a copy of this work, see Ḥusām al-Dīn ‘Alī Bidlīsī, *Kanz al-khafi fi bayān maqāmāt al-ṣūfī*, Milli Kütüphanesi, Ms. Nevşehir ÜR 201, 83a.

⁴⁶ These works include Nizam al-Din Hasan Nishapuri’s *al-Risala al-shamsiyya fi al-hisab*, Safi al-Din ‘Abd al-Mu‘min Urmavi’s *Risalat al-adwar fi al-musiqi*, Shams al-Din Samarqandi’s *Risalat ashkal al-ta‘sis*, and Nasir al-Din Tusi’s *Risalat al-tadhkira fi ‘ilm al-hay‘a*, Bidlīsī, *Majmū‘a*, Ragıp Paşa 919.

⁴⁷ For the role of Tabriz in the cultural life of this period, see Judith Pfeiffer, *Politics, Patronage, and the Transmission of Knowledge in 13th–15th Century Tabriz* (Leiden: Brill, 2014).

⁴⁸ Chad G. Lingwood, *Politics, Poetry, and Sufism in Medieval Iran: New Perspectives on Jāmī’s Salāmān va Absāl* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 82–86.

Tabriz and the patronage of the Aqqyunlu court also attracted prominent scholars as they traversed the central lands of Islam and afforded the residents of the city opportunities to benefit from the learning of the greatest luminaries of their day. Such was the case, with the sojourn of ‘Abd al-Rahman Jami, one of the most celebrated poets and Sufis of the century, during his return from pilgrimage in 1472. Reflecting on his experiences studying mystical matters with his father, Bidlisi describes Jami’s arrival and stay in Tabriz and recollected the learned gathering of scholars and students that the great man’s stay afforded. Idris participated in the ensuing discussion and remembered proudly his youthful interaction with the great scholar on the mystical works of Mahmud Shabistari.⁴⁹ In this sense, the urban environment of Tabriz and Bidlisi’s paternal connections to Uzun Hasan’s court constituted an equally formative component of Bidlisi’s intellectual and spiritual development as an adolescent in the 1470s.

BIDLISI IN THE AQQUYUNLU CHANCERY

Despite his father’s stimulating scholarly circles in Tabriz, Bidlisi, as a young man, decided to enter royal service at the court of Uzun Hasan’s son and eventual successor Ya‘qub. The intellectual and cultural life of the court attracted Bidlisi to the Aqqyunlu palace and informed his decision to enter a scribal career. While he would later remember his entry into secretarial service as a distraction from his commitment to mystical matters, as a young man he relished the opportunity to work in an intellectually stimulating environment.⁵⁰ The timing of his entry into administrative life roughly coincided with a number of crucial political developments within the Aqqyunlu court that would have important ramifications for the future of the Bayandur dynasty.

Throughout Bidlisi’s childhood, Uzun Hasan’s ascendant political fortunes precipitated an aggressive Aqqyunlu political and ideological program with respect to the polity’s neighbors. Between 1467 and 1469, the Aqqyunlu confederation under Uzun Hasan’s leadership defeated all of the principal elements of the Qaraqyunlu confederation, as well as the

⁴⁹ Bidlīsī, *Ḥaqq al-mubīn*, 3b–4a.

⁵⁰ In *Ḥaqq al-mubīn* (*The Truth of the Obvious*), Bidlisi remarks that forty years of service to sultans kept him from consideration of mystical matters, Bidlīsī, *Ḥaqq al-mubīn*, 4a. These forty years are likely not literal, but simply a reference to a long period of time. In any event Springtime of the Innocent clarifies Bidlisi’s youthful enthusiasm for service to the court and also suggests that he only entered service for Ya‘qub in 1480.

Timurid ruler of Khurasan, Sultan-Abu Saʿid (d. 1469), and established its court at Tabriz, the prestigious former capital city of the Ilkhanid dynasty. Following his victory over Sultan-Abu Saʿid, Uzun Hasan sought to exert his political will against his western Mamluk and Ottoman neighbors. Political confrontation with the Mamluk and Ottoman sultanates assumed both military and ideological dimensions. Throughout the early 1470s, Aqquyunlu troops engaged Mamluk and Ottoman contingents west of the Euphrates. In addition to these military confrontations, Uzun Hasan also asserted his independent sovereign authority with respect to these two western neighbors. Beginning in 1469, Uzun Hasan outfitted the Iraqi pilgrimage caravan with an elaborately embroidered palanquin (*mahmil*). Traditionally, outfitting a *mahmil* was reserved for independent sovereign rulers and Uzun Hasan's gesture was rightfully interpreted by the Mamluks as a mark of his independence and desire to usurp the place of honor occupied by the Mamluk-outfitted Egyptian pilgrimage caravan.⁵¹ With respect to the Ottomans, Uzun Hasan extended his protection to the Karamanid ruler Pir Ahmad, who had fled to Uzun Hasan's court in the wake of a failed insurrection against his Ottoman overlords.⁵² Both actions represented an affront to the political authority of these western neighbors and led to further military confrontation. In the summer of 1473 the main Ottoman and Aqquyunlu armies clashed beside the Başkent River at a place called Otlukbeli.

While Uzun Hasan's devastating defeat in the battle resulted in little territorial loss, the blow to the sultan's prestige and confidence contributed to deterioration in the sultan's health and entailed serious consequences for the subsequent history of the Aqquyunlu polity. Reflecting on this period, Bidlisi strongly associated the sultan's poor health with the political wellbeing of the body politic: "Gradually the misfortune of his own bodily illness and the discordant condition of the state appeared to him. Several illnesses of his temperament were prolonged on account of the force of his carnal desires and the weakness of his spiritual strength."⁵³ In the years following the defeat, Uzun Hasan embarked on few military campaigns against neighboring powers and upon Uzun Hasan's death in 1478, various factions supporting the sultan's sons and nephews plunged

⁵¹ For general remarks on the *mahmil*, see Fr. Buhl and J. Jomier, "Maḥmal," *EF*²; on its relation to the Aqquyunlu-Mamluk rivalry, see Woods, *The Aqquyunlu*, 107–8.

⁵² Bidlisi suggests that the protection and support Uzun Hasan provided Pir Ahmad was one of the principal causes of Ottoman-Aqquyunlu hostilities, see Bidlisi, *HB*, 456a.

⁵³ Bidlisi, *HB*, 513b.

into open civil war.⁵⁴ The disorder of the civil war lasted one year before Uzun Hasan's fourteen-year-old son Ya'qub emerged victorious over the other factions. In Bidlisi's estimation, the enthronement of the young sultan marked the beginning of a period of relative order and calm within Aqqyunlu domains, which Bidlisi frequently remembers as an effect of the young sultan's just countenance. Incidentally, Ya'qub's accession also marked the beginning of Bidlisi's literary career and initiation into the scribal services of the Aqqyunlu palace.

Bidlisi's vehicle for entry into a secretarial career was a relatively short epistle, entitled *Rabī' al-abrar* (*Springtime of the Innocent*), which he penned in spring 1480 in praise of the superiority of spring over the other seasons.⁵⁵ Learned young men often composed short epistles or poems in praise of a potential patron with the hope that, impressed with the erudition of the author, the powerful individual would offer employment.⁵⁶ The selection of the attributes of spring for the subject of the epistle was significant because the topic allowed him to showcase his mastery of rhetorical and literary techniques, while also demonstrating his facility in a range of exact sciences including astronomy and meteorology. Throughout the work, Bidlisi seeks to elevate his discourse through florid language and complex metaphors. As spring, the season of new life, spreads its effects over the world through warming sunlight and nurturing showers, so the young sultan spreads the lights of justice over the world and showers his subjects with displays of munificence:

The meadow as fresh as Paradise
Became worthy of the fortune-favored king's banquet

Sultan Ya'qub, grace and gift of the world
For the world was made young by his justice

All the king's lands, a garden became
From the security of his justice, a peaceful domain

From the cloud of munificence in the age of his showering generosity,
His ocean-like hand scattered forth pearls

⁵⁴ Woods, *The Aqqyunlu*, 125–27.

⁵⁵ On the dating of this epistle, see Markiewicz, "The Crisis of Rule," 47.

⁵⁶ For an example of this process in the context of mid-sixteenth-century Ottoman patronage, consider the example of Mustafa 'Āli (Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual in the Ottoman Empire*, 34).

The stars followed his shining ideas
Such that every aim he sought was realized

It was his shadow that stood sentry over the earth
When his sword became the watchman of the age.⁵⁷

Bidlisi's emphasis on the sultan's generosity rather obviously reinforces the other intention of the work, namely a request for patronage. At the end of the epistle, he extends the metaphor of the youthful effects of spring when he requests that his work (or he himself) be accepted by the servants of Ya'qub's palace. The preface ends with Bidlisi's hope that "this early fruit of the orchard of refinement, this young wine of the garden of reflection will arrive to a place of acceptance in the good-natured noses and on the straight-minded palates of the servants of that sky-pillared palace and heaven-ceilinged gathering."⁵⁸ Evidently the court reacted favorably to this early literary effort, for a few months later Bidlisi counted himself among the sultan's servants as the imperial court disembarked from its summer camp in Mughan; in the epistle he wrote shortly after *Springtime of the Innocent*, he introduces himself as "this retainer of this virtuous royal household, the poor servant of God."⁵⁹

As a learned young man with family connections to the Bayandur dynasty, Bidlisi found work in the central chancery of the Royal Administrative Council (*divan-i a'la*) of the Aqqyunlu court. As previously mentioned, the roles of military men and urban notables were well defined in Persian courts of the fifteenth century. In the Aqqyunlu case, the *Türk* and *Tajik* high-ranking officers of the central administration gathered in the Royal Administrative Council to advise the sultan and help formulate policy. *Tajiks* held the principal government secretariats of the scribal, financial, and religious administration, while *Turks* generally held positions in the military administration and palace offices. The government secretaries consisted of the minister of religious affairs (*sadr al-shari'a*), the chief Islamic military judge (*qazi al-askar*), the chief financial minister (*vazir*), the state secretary (*munshi al-mamalik*), and the state comptroller (*mustawfi*).⁶⁰ While a hierarchy certainly existed among the principal

⁵⁷ Bidlīsī, *Rabī' al-abrār*, Ayasofya 3986, 37b; Bidlīsī, *Rabī' al-abrār*, Esad Efendi 1888, 233b.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 234a/b.

⁵⁹ Bidlīsī, *Risāla-yi khazāniya*, SK Ms. Esad Efendi 1888, 241b.

⁶⁰ On late medieval Persian chancery, see Walther Hinz, "Die Persische Geheimkanzlei im Mittelalter," in *FS Rudolf Tschudi*, 1954, 342–55; for an overview of the Aqqyunlu royal council, see Woods, *The Aqqyunlu*, 15–17; on the Safavid period, see Colin Paul

secretarial offices, there were few clearly defined career paths within the administration.⁶¹ High-ranking officers often shifted from one position to another and during some periods held multiple positions within the administration. Moreover, the actual activities of any particular officer were only loosely based on the attributes of his office.⁶²

Perhaps as a result of this ad hoc approach to governance, aspiring secretaries sought to develop their talents in the widest array of fields applicable to administration. The training and duties of a secretary in the Aqqyunlu court of the late fifteenth century largely corresponded with Bidlisi's varied scholarly interests, which ranged from literature and rhetoric to the application of the exact sciences to practical problems.⁶³ The variegated activities of a secretary therefore appealed to his intellectual inclinations. For this reason, as an elder statesman among the Ottomans, Bidlisi identified the attributes of a secretary as derived primarily from his ability to use reason (*'aql*).⁶⁴ Recognizing this faculty as the most important gift that God had bestowed upon humankind, he considered its exercise the primary mode by which humans could bring order to the world. In light of this gift, kings, who were entrusted to rule for the sake of order, "had a need for the lords of sound reason in order to organize subjects and soldiers, especially with respect to the safeguarding and caretaking of property and wealth, as well as with respect to regulating relations among the army."⁶⁵ In other words, a ruler required secretaries who could effectively record the decisions that regulated his subjects and

Mitchell, *The Practice of Politics in Safavid Iran: Power, Religion and Rhetoric* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2009), 49–50; and Floor, *Safavid Government Institutions*, 1–74.

⁶¹ Davani's treatise on a military review of the provincial government of Fars clarifies aspects of the relative rank of Aqqyunlu military and civilian officers, Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Davānī, "Arżnāma," ed. Kilisli Rif'at Efendi, *Millî Tettebbu'lar Mecmū'ası* II, 5 (n.d.): 273–305; V. Minorsky, "A Civil and Military Review in Fārs in 881/1476," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies, University of London* 10, 1 (1939): 169–71.

⁶² For the persistence of this approach into the Safavid period, see Floor, *Safavid Government Institutions*, 41.

⁶³ On the education of secretaries, see Colin Mitchell, "Safavid Imperial Tarassul and the Persian Insha Tradition," *Studia Iranica* 26, 2 (1997): 173–209; Muzaffar Alam, *The Languages of Political Islam: India 1200–1800* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 128–32; Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "The Making of a Munshi," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East* 24, 2 (2004): 61–72.

⁶⁴ Şahin, *Empire and Power*, 233–38.

⁶⁵ Bidlīsī, *HB*, 614a.

maintain accurate accounts to help preserve the financial basis of the kingdom.

The practical training of a secretary reflected this theoretical understanding. Since the earliest periods of Islamic history, state administrators had produced scribal manuals that described the duties of a secretary, often accompanied by examples of all the kinds of chancery documents a secretary would need to produce in his professional capacity. While the first of these manuals were written in Arabic, secretaries working for Seljuk courts began to produce manuals in Persian beginning in the twelfth century.⁶⁶ In both Arabic and Persian letters, this tradition likely reached its most comprehensive point in the fifteenth century.⁶⁷ In addition to these manuals, prominent statesmen and scholars gathered and collated examples of elegant prose that had been produced for official purposes. Often, especially in later periods, works presented as manuals in their prefaces simply offered examples of elevated prose with little explanation or overt consideration of its diplomatic function in a chancery context.⁶⁸ Whether as diplomatic manuals or collections of prose, these two types of works primarily contributed to a secretary's ability to compose correspondence and formulate rescripts. While these two sorts of works aided the production of useful and elegant documents, other works sharpened Bidlisi's ability to maintain accurate accounts. Beginning in the late Abbasid period, secretaries began categorizing their accounting activities as a distinct formal body of knowledge known as the science of revenue

⁶⁶ For an early Persian manual from the Seljuk period, see Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Khāliq Mayhanī, *Destūr-i Debīrī*, ed. Adnan Sadık Erzi (Ankara: Türk Tarih Basımevi, 1962).

⁶⁷ Colin Mitchell suggests that the late fifteenth century witnessed a resurgence of interest in epistolography (Colin Paul Mitchell, "To Preserve and Protect: Husayn Va'iz-i Kashifi and Perso-Islamic Chancellery Culture," *Iranian Studies* 36, 4 [2003]: 487); for fifteenth-century Arabic examples of the genre, consider Aḥmad ibn 'Alī Qalqashandī, *Kitāb Ṣubḥ al-a'shā*, 14 vols. (al-Qāhirah: al-Maṭba'ah al-Amīriyah, 1331); Taqī al-Dīn Abū Bakr al-Ḥamawī, *Kitāb Qahwat al-inshā'*, ed. Rudolf Veselý, al-Ṭab'ah 1., vol. 36, al-Nasharāt al-Islāmiyah; 36 (Berlin: Klaus Schwartz Verlag, 2005); for Persian, consider Maḥmūd Gāvān, *Riyāz al-inshā'*, eds. Chānd Ḥusayn and Ghulām Yazdānī (Ḥaydarābād-i Dakkān: Sarkār-i 'Ālī, 1948); Maḥmūd Gāvān, *Manāẓir al-inshā'*, Farhangistān-i Zabān va Adab-i Fārsī 12 (Tīhrān: Farhangistān-i Zabān va Adab-i Fārsī, 1381); Jalāl al-Dīn Yūsuf Aḥl, *Farā'id-i ghiyāṣī*, ed. Heshmat Moayyad (Tehran: Foundation for Iranian Culture, 1977).

⁶⁸ This is especially true of collections produced by scholars with no official connection to a chancery. See for example, 'Abd al-Raḥmān Jāmī, *Inshā-yi Jāmī* (Kānpūr: Naval Kishor, 1893).

bookkeeping (*‘ilm al-siyaqa wa’l-hisab*).⁶⁹ To facilitate its mastery, secretaries produced accounting manuals that were specifically designed to aid in cadastral land surveys, tax assessments, and revenue accounting.⁷⁰

The skills exhibited in these epistolographic and accounting manuals are reflected in a compendium compiled by Bidlisi himself at the turn of the sixteenth century and underscore the wide range of professional qualities required of a secretary.⁷¹ Like the compendia of contemporary Anatolian secretaries – such as Pir Muhammad ibn Ya‘qub al-Nikidi, a provincial secretary working in Karaman in the mid-1470s – Bidlisi’s compendium demonstrates the variegated yet specific sorts of knowledge a secretary sought to cultivate in his personal notebooks.⁷² The first two sections of the compendium contain secretaries’ manuals written in Persian for Ilkhanid and Timurid courts. In addition to these manuals, the compendium contains another work on accounting dedicated to Shah-rukh’s chief minister, Pir Ahmad Khvafi and entitled *Shams al-siyaqa fi’l-hisab* (*The Sun of Script in Accounting*).⁷³ While these three works elaborated the fundamental skills necessary for Bidlisi’s profession, he supplemented these manuals through the inclusion of a number of other works designed to facilitate an elegant use of language, including a copy of *Springtime of the Innocent* and some of his own secretarial work completed in Aqquyunlu employment.⁷⁴

Bidlisi’s inclusion of several secretarial manuals produced in Herat reflects the broader influence of eastern and central Iranian administrative practice within the Aqquyunlu chancery. The territorial expansion and

⁶⁹ C. J. Heywood, “Siyākat,” *El²*; on accounting practice in fifteenth-century Herat, see Subtelny *Timurids in Transition*, especially 80–2, 143–46.

⁷⁰ See, for example, the work on accounting of the thirteenth-century scholar, Naṣīr Al-Dīn Ṭūsī, in Mojtaba Minovi and Vladimir Minorsky, “Naṣīr Al-Dīn Ṭūsī on Finance,” *BSOAS*, 10, 3 (1940): 755–89. For important examples from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, see Nejat Göyünç, “Das sogenannte Gāme’ o’l-Hesāb des’Emād assarāwī: Ein Leitf. d. staatl. Rechnungswesens v. ca. 1340” (1962) and ‘Abd Allāh ibn Muḥammad Māzandarānī, *Die Resalā-ye Falakiyyā des’Abdollah ibn Mohammad ibn Kiya al- Mazandarani; ein persischer Leitfaden des staatlichen Rechnungswesens (um 1363)*, ed. Walther Hinz (Wiesbaden: F. Steiner, 1952).

⁷¹ Bidlīsī, *Majmū’a*, SK Ms. Ayasofya 3986. For analysis of the authorship of this compendium, see Markiewicz, “The Crisis of Rule,” 54–55.

⁷² *Majmū’a*, SK Ms. Nurbanu Sultan 122, 35a, 118b. See also Şinasi Tekin, “Fatih Sultan Mehmed Devrine Âit Bir İnşâ Mecmuası,” *Journal of Turkish Studies* 20 (1996): 267–311.

⁷³ For a discussion of this work, see Walther Hinz, “Ein orientalisches Handelsunternehmen im 15. Jahrhundert,” *Die Welt des Orients* 1, 4 (1950): 313–40; Subtelny, *Timurids in Transition*, 80–81.

⁷⁴ Bidlīsī, *Majmū’a*, Ms. Ayasofya 3986, 37a–66b.

imperial aspirations of the Aqqyunlu polity during the reign of Uzun Hasan necessitated an equally pronounced expansion of its scribal corps. With the elimination of its Qaraqyunlu and Timurid rivals, Uzun Hasan's court incorporated many of the most gifted secretaries and state functionaries of its defeated enemies into its own expanding administration. For instance, Siraj al-Din Qasim Naqshbandi, who served as chief of protocol and chancellor for Uzun Hasan, arrived at the Aqqyunlu court after more than twenty years of service in the court of Abu Yusuf Qaraqyunlu.⁷⁵ Similarly, the early Safavid historian Khwandamir notes that Mawlana Nizam al-Din 'Abd al-Hayy, who had served as chancellor (*sahib-i divan-i insha'*) in the Timurid court of Sultan-Abu Sa'id, received the patronage of Uzun Hasan after the Battle of Qarabagh in 1469.⁷⁶

In addition to these two secretaries, Abu Bakr Tihrani's activities in the Aqqyunlu chancery of Uzun Hasan represent another important example of the Aqqyunlu recruitment of Timurid and Qaraqyunlu secretarial personnel.⁷⁷ As a secretary and historian of the Bayandur dynasty, Tihrani adapted for the Aqqyunlu court the Timurid ideological principles that he had absorbed in his youth through work in the administration of Shahrukh's rebellious grandson Sultan-Muhammad in his homeland of Isfahan, and later as historian for the Qaraqyunlu sultan Jahanshah. Shortly after Uzun Hasan's defeat of the Timurid sultan Sultan-Abu-Sa'id, Tihrani received an invitation from the Aqqyunlu ruler to join his court.⁷⁸ From the time Tihrani joined Uzun Hasan in April 1469 until the time of his death in 1481, he played a major role in formulating Uzun Hasan's royal image both through the composition of diplomatic correspondence and other official pronouncements, as well as through the completion of a history of the dynasty entitled *Kitab-i Diyarbakriya* (*The Diyarbakrian Tome*). Tihrani's history of the Bayandur dynasty presents one significant legitimating term that Bidlisi adopted thirty years later when writing his history of the Ottoman dynasty. In the lifetime and career of Timur, the term *sahib-qiran* (Master of the Auspicious Conjunction) connoted the celestial ordination of a world conqueror. Although *sahib-qiran* was used in encomiastic Persian poetry as early as

⁷⁵ Woods, *The Aqqyunlu*, 18; Ḥusayn Karbalā'ī Tabrizī, *Rawzāt al-jinān va-jannāt al-janān*, ed. Ja'far Sulṭān Qurṛā'ī (Tehran: Bungāh-i Tarjumah va Nashr-i Kitāb, 1965), 1:89–91.

⁷⁶ Khwandamir, *Tārīkh-i ḥabīb al-siyar fī akhbār-i afrād-i bashar* (Tehran: Kitābfurūshī-i Khayyām, 1362 [1954]), 4:108.

⁷⁷ On Tihrani's life, see Fuat Sezgin's introduction in Abu Bakr Tihrani, *Kitab-ı Diyarbakriyya: Ak-Koyunlar tarihi*, vol. 1 (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1993), 1: i–xxv.

⁷⁸ Tihrani, *Kitab-ı Diyarbakriyya*, 1: xii.

the eleventh century, in the fifteenth century the term became synonymous with Timur and his descendants.⁷⁹ Most fifteenth-century Timurid histories almost exclusively refer to the world conqueror or his son Shahrukh by this appellation. In *The Diyarbakrian Tome*, Tihrani follows this example up to a point. For instance, in his enumeration of Uzun Hasan's forebears, he notes that Uzun Hasan's grandfather, Qara 'Usman, enjoyed great authority during the reign of "Sahib-qiran, the great world-protecting emperor Timur *Kuragan* (imperial son-in-law, a reference to his marital ties to Chingissid royalty) and received protection and reinforcement from him."⁸⁰ Despite this recognition of the world conqueror's status, Tihrani does not extend the same courtesy to Timur's descendants and instead associates the term with his own patron Uzun Hasan.⁸¹ This innovation is significant as it represents the first prominent usage of this title in a non-Timurid history in the fifteenth century. In this sense, the application of a Timurid vocabulary of sovereignty to the Aqqyunlu context can be seen as a relatively natural outgrowth of Tihrani's extensive experience in the courts of Timurid and Qaraqyunlu princes before finding a place in the Aqqyunlu chancery.

Between his entry into Ya'qub's chancery and his flight from Tabriz in 1502, Bidlisi rose in the ranks from low-level functionary of the chancery (*mutasaddi-yi divan-i insha'*) to state secretary (*munshi al-mamalik*).⁸² While the precise trajectory of his promotion is difficult to establish, the record of his activities in the council as reflected in his prose collection provides an important view toward the general business of the late-Aqqyunlu chancery, as well as many of the salient external and internal political challenges that the Aqqyunlu polity faced in the wake

⁷⁹ Naindeep Chann, "Lord of the Auspicious Conjunction: Origins of the Sāhib-qirān," *Iran and the Caucasus* 13, 1 (2009): 93–110; A. Azfar Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign*, 26, n16. On the continuing significance of the title in Mughal India, see Lisa Balanbanlilar, "The Lords of the Auspicious Conjunction: Turco-Mongol Imperial Identity on the Subcontinent," *Journal of World History*, 8, 1 (2007): 1–39.

⁸⁰ Tihrani, *Kitab-i Diyarbakriyya*, vol. 1, 1:12.

⁸¹ Tihrani frequently refers to his patron, Uzun Hasan, as *Sahib-qiran*. Tihrani, *Kitab-i Diyarbakriyya*, vol. 2.

⁸² In his presentation of an imperial letter Bidlisi drafted for Sultan Ya'qub in 1485, Bidlisi states that he wrote the letter in his capacity as *mutasaddi-yi divan-i insha* (Bidlisi, *HB*, 535b). The term *mutasaddi* was used for members of the scribal corps in Aqqyunlu and Safavid administrations, see B. G. Martin, "Seven Safavid Documents from Azarbayjan," in *Documents from Islamic Chanceries*, ed. S. M. Stern, Oriental Studies 3 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), 171–206. According to correspondence he included in his prose collection, it is clear that he held the title of *munshi divan al-mamalik* at the Aqqyunlu court (Bidlisi, *Majmū'a*, Ms. Ayasofya 3986, 54b).

of Uzun Hasan's death. Accordingly, the variety of material Bidlisi includes in his prose collection ranges from official correspondence with neighboring sovereigns to internally circulated announcements, titles of investiture, and tax exemptions for notables.

Although Bidlisi's general appraisal of Sultan Ya'qub's reign focuses on the peace and stability that the sultan secured, the early years of his reign witnessed a number of internal threats that precipitated important realignments within the royal court. One of his first significant assignments within the chancery was to write the victory proclamation (*fathnama*) communicating news of the defeat of Bayandur ibn Rustam. Bayandur was Ya'qub's second cousin and an instrumental member of the coalition that brought the young prince to power in 1478. Yet, when appointed by Ya'qub to quash the resurgent radical messianic Musha'sha' movement in Khuzistan, Bayandur advanced only as far as Hamadan and instead announced his independence.⁸³

The rebellion was quickly put down and in the wake of Bayandur's defeat, Bidlisi was ordered to compose the victory proclamation that was intended for circulation within Aqquyunlu domains. Bidlisi's appointment to compose the announcement of victory underscores the esteem with which his prose was held at court. At the time of Bayandur's late 1481, Bidlisi had been attached to Ya'qub's court for little more than one year and in that period his composition of *Springtime of the Innocent* and another epistle on the virtues of autumn must have further impressed the court. Special missives informing subjects and neighboring sovereigns of victory, and so termed victory proclamations (s. *fathnama*), constituted an established tradition within Islamic chanceries since at least the eleventh century.⁸⁴ In the fifteenth century, rulers regularly informed neighboring sovereigns of their major victories over internal and external enemies. In addition to providing a brief description of the military activity that led to victory, the letters communicated a ruler's self-image

⁸³ Woods, *The Aqquyunlu*, 129–30.

⁸⁴ al-Qalqashandī provides an example of a victory proclamation for the Abbasid caliph al-Mu'tasim bi-llah, al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-a'shā*, 6:400; these announcements as regular chancery practice seem to develop more substantially beginning in the Seljuk courts of the eleventh century, per Osman Turan, *Türkiye Selçukluları Hakkında resmî vesikalar Metin, Tercüme ve Araştırmalar* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1958); for its use in the Ottoman context, see Ağâh Sırrı Levend, *Ğazavât-Nâmeler ve Mihaloğlu Ali Bey'in Ğazavât-Nâmesi* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1956).

to his peers.⁸⁵ The circulation of similar missives within the domains of a polity served a similar purpose insofar as they sought to strengthen a populace's bonds of fealty toward the ruler. Indeed, in the early sixteenth century, Ottoman sultans sent uniform victory proclamations to the judges of all the major cities of the sultanate, which were in turn read aloud to the populace at the time of Friday prayers.⁸⁶ In this sense then, the circulation of a victory missive in the wake of a serious rebellion offered Ya'qub a critical opportunity to reassert his authority throughout Aqqyunlu domains. While the letter provides important details regarding how events developed, Bidlisi focuses the content of the letter on the theoretical relationship between a king and his servants by elucidating the dual role of the sovereign as succor of the obedient and scourge of the rebellious. He begins the missive by pointing to Ya'qub's special position as the beneficiary of God's special aid: "The high-flying phoenix of the lofty zeal of our desire spread its triumphant wings in the air of divine succor and aid."⁸⁷ The consequence of this favor is that the sultan always attains his desire, especially whenever subjects are disobedient and obstinate: "the blood-shedder of divine wrath hastens to the place of vengeance with the bloody sword of [the Quranic verse] (6:45): 'So, the people that committed wrong were eliminated.'"⁸⁸ Bidlisi contrasts the sultan's potentially brutal vengeance with the generosity he shows his servants, especially with respect to Bayandur.⁸⁹ As the favors bestowed on Bayandur were returned

⁸⁵ On Ottoman victory proclamations, see Geoffrey L. Lewis, "The Utility of the Ottoman Fethnames," in *Historians of the Middle East*, eds. Bernard Lewis and P. M. Holt (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), 192–96; on victory proclamations from the reign of Uzun Hasan, see Matthew Melvin-Koushki, "The Delicate Art of Aggression: Uzun Hasan's Fathnama to Qaytbay of 1469," *Iranian Studies* 44, 2 (2011): 193–214; on victory proclamations as statements of the royal self-image, see Claire Norton, "Iconographs of Power or Tools of Diplomacy: Ottoman Fethnames," *JEMH* 20 (2016): 331–50.

⁸⁶ See, for instance, victory proclamations in the collection of Feridun Beğ addressed to the judges of Ottoman domains, Feridun Beğ, *Münşe'ât-i selâtin* (Istanbul, 1274–75), 1:431; there are some indications that these victory proclamations were read aloud to the populace at Friday prayers. Lami'i Çelebi includes one such proclamation for the Ottoman conquest of Hungary in 1526 in his prose collection and notes that the announcement was read aloud at Bursa's Ulu Cami, Lâmi'î Çelebi, *Münşeât-i Lâmi'î*, SK Ms. Esad Efendi 3316, 106b.

⁸⁷ Ebû'l-Faẓl Meḥmed, *Inshā*, İstanbul Üniversitesi Nadir Eserler Kütüphanesi Ms. F 906, 27b.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 28a.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

with disobedience and treachery, the sultan necessarily appointed capable men to subdue the rebellious commander.⁹⁰

While the central message of the letter is clear, the role of the chancery in mediating the relations between a king and his subjects deserves some consideration. Certainly, Bidlisi was tasked with composing the victory proclamation by virtue of his burgeoning reputation as a talented man of letters. In this regard, his purpose was to communicate eloquently Ya'qub's position on the particular matter of Bayandur's insurrection. Although the central message was likely a matter of policy dictated by the highest echelons of the court, the particular expression of this message was left to Bidlisi's prerogative. As we will see in later chapters, secretaries exercised considerable independence in the publicly consumed rescripts that they composed, even as such compositions conveyed ideological positions ostensibly formulated and articulated by their sovereign masters. In this manner, the chancery constituted a crucial site for the fashioning of legitimating ideology.

The Aqquyunlu court certainly appreciated Bidlisi's work, for in the following years, he penned several notable missives to Ya'qub's Timurid and Ottoman neighbors.⁹¹ With respect both to the Timurid Sultan-Husayn and Bayezid II, Bidlisi's letters emphasize the bonds of friendship that existed between his master, Sultan Ya'qub and these neighboring rulers. Indeed, Bidlisi's important role in cultivating goodwill between these sultanates is clearly observable in the Aqquyunlu response that he drafted to an Ottoman victory proclamation addressed to Ya'qub. In the early years of Bayezid's reign, the Ottoman court was equally interested in securing good relations with Ya'qub. In the first two years of Bayezid's rule, his brother Cem posed a dynastic threat to Bayezid's reign through his asserted claims to rule and repeated incursions into Ottoman domains. In the wake of Cem's flight to Rhodes in 1482, Bayezid took advantage of his newfound security through a campaign against Moldavia. The successful outcome of the campaign, which resulted in the capture of Kili and Akkirman on the Black Sea coast, was announced to the Aqquyunlu court in a victory proclamation. The Ottoman letter stressed the ties of

⁹⁰ The letter specifically mentions Khalil Beg Sufi who sent Bayandur's head to Ya'qub and administered punishment to the others, *ibid.*, 29a/b.

⁹¹ Both manuscript copies of Bidlisi's prose collection positively identify a letter from 1484 to Sultan-Husayn Bayqara as his own composition. Ayasofya 3986 notes that the letter is "from among my own," while the manuscript assembled by Bidlisi's son Ebu'l-Fazl Mehmed states that the letter is his father's composition (*insha-yi abavi*), Bidlisi, *Majmū'a*, Ms. Ayasofya 3986, 48b; Ebū'l-Fazl Mehmed, *Inshā*, 9a.

friendship between the two rulers and emphasized Ya‘qub’s good qualities as a ruler by positing his possession of the blessings of ethics (*havi-i ma‘asir-i mafakhir al-sa‘adat bi-makarim al-akhlaq*), the possession of which would become a major feature of Bidlisi’s vision of ideal rule in later years.⁹²

Similarly, in the Aqqyunlu reply, Bidlisi endeavored to extend every courtesy to the Ottoman ruler. To this end, in his address to Bayezid, Bidlisi not only lauded the sultan as a warrior in the path of God (*al-mujahid fi sabil Allah*), but also as “the renewer of the foundations of Islam and the constructor of the institutions of the faith (*mujaddid asas al-islam wa’l-muslimin mushayyid marasim al-din*).”⁹³ Attributing the qualities of a warrior in the faith (*ghazi* or *mujahid*) to an Ottoman sultan was a common courtesy that many of the late fifteenth-century rulers extended throughout this period.⁹⁴ In contrast, the notion of a temporal ruler as renewer of the faith (*mujaddid*) was an innovation that grew out of an early fifteenth-century Timurid ideological program that sought to cast Shahrukh as the preeminent ruler of his time.⁹⁵ By the late fifteenth century the term was gaining a wider currency within the central lands of Islam, a point to which we will return in Chapter 4.

The movement of secretaries from one court to another facilitated the spread of this new vocabulary of sovereignty. In fact, Bidlisi’s counterpart in this diplomatic exchange with the Ottomans was also a product of Aqqyunlu administrative circles, and had taken up work within the Ottoman chancery only after his capture on the battlefield at Otlukbeli in 1473. The author of the Ottoman victory proclamation, Sayyid Shams al-Din Muhammad Munshi Shirazi, often known in contemporary sources as Mawlana Munshi, had served Uzun Hasan as a secretary in the Aqqyunlu chancery.⁹⁶ In the aftermath of Uzun Hasan’s defeat at

⁹² Bidlisi, *HB*, 535b; for a discussion of the place of an ethical comportment in kingship, see Chapter 6.

⁹³ The Aqqyunlu reply as included in Feridun Beğ differs from the letter Bidlisi includes in *Eight Paradises* and claims as his own composition. I am more inclined to trust Bidlisi’s claim and presentation of the letter. It is unlikely that he would have tried to pass off a different letter as the original when so many of his readers were intimately involved in the events that he reports. For a comparison of the letters, see Feridun Beğ, *Münşe‘āt*, 1:297 and Bidlisi, *HB*, 536b–538a.

⁹⁴ For a fifteenth-century example of this usage in the context of Ottoman-Mamluk relations, see Muslu, *The Ottomans and the Mamluks*, 114.

⁹⁵ Binbaş, *Intellectual Networks in Timurid Iran*, 261–65.

⁹⁶ Mawlana Munshi is mentioned in a number of sixteenth-century Ottoman and Safavid chronicles, all of which likely base their account on the details that Bidlisi provides.

Otlukbeli, the Ottomans captured a number of high-ranking military officers and notable learned men. Mawlana Munshi was among them and Bidlisi notes that Sultan Mehmed, in recognition of their accomplishments, freed them and “bestowed upon them gifts appropriate to their worthiness of station.”⁹⁷ According to Bidlisi, Mawlana Munshi, along with the other notables, stayed among the Ottomans for many years where “they were gratified in the shadow of royal favor through various gifts and displays of largesse. Most of them arrived at a high and exalted position and witnessed such patronage and care in this generous (Ottoman) court as had never been seen.”⁹⁸ While Bidlisi may overstate the reception of these notables in the Ottoman court, Mawlana Munshi clearly played a significant role in the subsequent composition of Ottoman royal letters written in Persian. For the rest of Mehmed II’s life and much of Bayezid II’s reign, he was an important author of diplomatic correspondence destined for Persian courts.⁹⁹ In addition to the victory proclamation of the siege of Akkirman and Kili, Mawlana Munshi composed at least four other letters addressed to Ya‘qub.¹⁰⁰ Moreover he represented an important link between the Ottoman learned class and prominent scholars in Persian lands. For instance, the sixteenth-century scholar Taşköprizade notes in his biographical entry for the Ottoman scholar Hatibzade that Jalal al-Din Davani, one of the greatest scholarly luminaries of Iran, used to correspond with his friend Mawlana Munshi, who was residing in Ottoman lands.¹⁰¹ Sultan Ya‘qub also recognized Mawlana Munshi’s value as a secretary and, in the midst of this spell of warm relations with the Ottomans, requested the secretary’s return to Tabriz. The proposal was politely declined both by Sultan Bayezid and by Mawlana Munshi himself, who, in a private letter to an Aqquyunlu commander, emphasized his

Compare for example, Bidlīsī, *HB*, 468a; Ḥasan Rūmlū, *Aḥsan al-tavārikh*, ed. ‘Abd al-Ḥusayn Navā’ī (Tehran: Bungāh-i Tarjuma va Nashr-i Kitāb, 1349), 2:541; Ḥoca Sa‘ded-dīn, *Tācü’-t-tevārīh*, 1:540.

⁹⁷ Bidlīsī, *HB*, 468a.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Sarī ‘Abdullāh Efendi attributes fourteen letters in his *insha’* collection as originating from Mawlana Munshi’s *insha’*, Sarī ‘Abdullāh Efendi, *Munsha’ āt-i fārsī*, SK Ms. Esad Efendi 3333.

¹⁰⁰ Sarī ‘Abdullāh Efendi, *Munsha’ āt-i fārsī*, Esad Efendi 3333.

¹⁰¹ Ahmed ibn Mustafa Taşköprizade, *al-Shaqā’iq al-nu’mānīyah fī ‘ulamā’ al-Dawlat al-Uthmānīyah*, ed. Ahmed Subhi Furat (Istanbul: Edebiyat Fakültesi Basımevi, 1985), 149.

contentment at the Ottoman court.¹⁰² Despite the broad renown Mawlana Munshi appears to have enjoyed in Ottoman lands, he never held high office within the Ottoman administration. Like a number of learned men at both the Aqqyunlu and Ottoman court, Mawlana Munshi probably enjoyed the regular patronage of the Ottoman sultans in exchange for periodic and variegated service.¹⁰³ For instance, although he is not mentioned on the regular payroll of the secretaries of the royal treasury, he occasionally received a dispensation (*tasadduq*) for his status as a learned notable.¹⁰⁴ Rather than a reflection of neglect, this reality underscores the ad hoc nature of Ottoman administrative practice during this period. For, even as secretaries exercised independent judgment in crafting royal correspondence, the bureaucratic protocol of scribal duties and appointments also remained flexible. In other words, the assignment to compose an important diplomatic communication frequently fell to talented scholars of acknowledged rhetorical ability whose regular activities and duties extended beyond the confines of the chancery.¹⁰⁵

ADMINISTRATIVE CHALLENGES AND THE END OF THE AQQUYUNLU ORDER

In addition to the ideological formulations developed for the Aqqyunlu and Ottomans by Bidlisi and “Mawlana Munshi alike, secretaries were also central to the more practical administrative matters that concerned these two powerful sultanates. Although Ottoman expansion and survival into the sixteenth century contrasts markedly with Aqqyunlu dysfunction and

¹⁰² While Ya‘qub’s letter requesting the return of Mawlana Munshi is not included in the contents of the manuscript, Bayezid’s reply makes clear the nature of Ya‘qub’s request, Sarı ‘Abdullāh Efendi, *Munsha’āt*, 131a–133b.

¹⁰³ For more on the position of learned men at Bayezid’s court, see Chapter 4. Such service as Mawlana Munshi rendered likely included specific assignments by leading Ottoman statesmen. For instance, during Sultan Ya‘qub’s reign he composed a letter on behalf of the Ottoman grand vizier Ahmed Pasha addressed to the Aqqyunlu vizier Qazi ‘Isa, Sarı ‘Abdullāh Efendi, *Munsha’āt*, 129b–30b.

¹⁰⁴ For instance, in May 1504, he received 200 *akçes* (*İnemat Defteri*, Istanbul, Atatürk Kitaplığı Muallim Cevdet O.71, p. 61).

¹⁰⁵ Feridūn Beğ specifies a couple of important royal letters written by scholars with no formal appointment to an Ottoman secretarial post. For instance, see Molla Gürani’s composition of the Ottoman letter to the Mamluks announcing the conquest of Constantinople (1:235) and Bidlisi’s letter to the Shirvanshah upon the conquest of Egypt in 1517 (1:437) Feridūn Beğ, *Münşe’āt-i selāṭīn*.

dissolution in the last decade of the fifteenth century, the underlying dynamics that informed political life, and by extension modes of governance, between these polities remained similar in their underlying dynamics. Notwithstanding near uniform sultanic efforts to conceive and project sovereignty in expansive, frequently absolute terms, rulers among the Ottomans, Aqquyunlu, Mamluks, and Timurids all required the loyalty, expertise, and cooperation of key elements of society, especially from the military and urban notable classes. To be sure, carefully cultivated reputations for justice expressed through ideological claims of divine favor certainly helped construe or constitute a king's authority, yet patronage and the extension of privileges to leading political and social groups helped maintain royal authority in equally fundamental ways.¹⁰⁶

Although the four major sultanates of the late fifteenth century all granted different types of privileges to leading elements within their societies, their basic effects and the sociopolitical dynamics that they fueled remained constant across these territories. Such privileges most frequently entailed the privatization of state lands or the granting of extensive tax exemptions on landed property. In Timurid and Aqquyunlu territories in Central Asia and Iran, such exemptions most frequently assumed the form of *suyurghals*, a remnant of the Ilkhanid period that by the fifteenth century was often construed as a usufruct grant offering complete exemption from any taxes or other royal interference and was bestowed on military commanders and members of the learned class.¹⁰⁷ In Timurid lands, specific *suyurghal* grants ranged from a single village to vast provinces or administrative districts.¹⁰⁸ In principle, they were not heritable since they required renewal or reconfirmation upon the death of their original beneficiary or the accession of a new ruler, but in practice such confirmation was rarely denied. Moreover, the landed property entailed as *suyurghal* might be included in or added to pious endowments

¹⁰⁶ This is a point emphasized by Maria Subtelny with respect to the Timurid and Turkmen sultanates, but may also be extended to all of the major sultanates of the late fifteenth century (Maria Subtelny, "Centralizing Reform and Its Opponents in the Late Timurid Period," *Iranian Studies* 21, 1–2 [1988]: 123–51).

¹⁰⁷ Gerhard Doerfer, *Türkische und mongolische Elemente im Neupersischen, unter besonderer Berücksichtigung älterer neupersischer Geschichtsquellen, vor allem der Mongolen- und Timuridenzeit* (Wiesbaden: F. Steiner, 1963), 1:351–53.

¹⁰⁸ Maria Subtelny, "Socioeconomic Bases of Cultural Patronage under the Later Timurids," *IJMES* 20, 4 (1988), 481.

(*waqf*), through means of which they were permanently and irrevocably alienated from the state as a taxable revenue source.¹⁰⁹

Ottoman and Mamluk central treasuries were susceptible to similar pressures in the fifteenth century. Although *suyurghals* did not exist within these sultanates, usufruct grants offered in exchange for military or governmental service – whether as *timar* in the Ottoman context or *iqta'* in Mamluk lands – were privatized (*tamlik*) either with sultanic sanction or through the judicial courts and in this manner alienated from the central treasury.¹¹⁰ Here too, such privatization could produce permanent alienation through the establishment of pious endowments, the endowed property of which frequently far exceeded the operating costs of the charitable work they were intended to support.¹¹¹ Indeed, by the beginning of the sixteenth century, approximately 40 percent of agricultural land in Egypt consisted of lands tied to pious endowments and as late as the mid sixteenth century the chief Ottoman jurisconsult, Ebu's-Su'ud Efendi issued religious opinions warning against the establishment of pious endowments from state lands (*miri*).¹¹² So, while sovereigns needed to secure the loyalty and support of important elements in society, the privileges that they distributed often alienated state lands from the royal treasury and led to the erosion of effective central administration. Aspects of Ottoman governance appeared to insulate the sultanate from the most corrosive effects of these privatizing and alienating processes. After all, for the much of the fifteenth century the Ottoman Sultanate was an expanding polity, so the gradual attrition of land revenue was more than offset by the expanding base upon which the central treasury drew. Even so, there are clear indications that the sultanate, particularly during the reign of Mehmed II, experienced similar fiscal pressures as a consequence of shortages in specie, pressures associated with maintaining a large army during a long period of campaigning, or as a result of its insatiable appetite

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 483.

¹¹⁰ Halil İnalçık, "Islamization of Ottoman Laws on Land Tax," in *Essay in Ottoman History* (Istanbul: Eren, 1998), 160; originally published in *Festgabe an Josef Matuz: Osmanistik-Turkologie-Diplomatik*, eds. Christa Fragner and Klaus Schwarz (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 1992): 100–16; Daisuke Igarashi, *Land Tenure, Fiscal Policy, and Imperial Power*, 177–82.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 185–86; Subtelny, "Socioeconomic Bases," 482.

¹¹² Igarashi, *Land Tenure, Fiscal Policy, and Imperial Power*, 177; İnalçık, "Islamization of Ottoman Laws on Land Tax," 161.

for revenue in its drive toward centralization.¹¹³ Indeed, in the last years of Mehmed's reign the sultanate reclaimed the tax revenue from lands alienated through privatization and the establishment of pious endowments.¹¹⁴

The Ottomans were not alone in such a reform effort and, in fact, between 1468 and 1497, all of the major sultanates of West Asia undertook major reforms to reestablish the financial bases of their respective central administrations through the confiscation of religious endowments and private property. In 1468, the Mamluk sultan, Qayitbay (r. 1468–96) experimented with a number of policies to raise revenue for costly military confrontations with the Ottomans and Aqquyunlu. Such policies included a proposal to reclaim pious endowments, but the pushback was too severe and the policy was withdrawn.¹¹⁵ Similarly, between 1487 and 1490, Sultan-Husayn also wrestled with the negative effects of *suyurghal* exemptions and under the auspices of his vizier, Khwaja Majd al-Din Muhammad Khvafi, the sultanate undertook a series of major reforms to combat financial corruption within Sultan-Husayn's council and reclaim lost sources of revenue.¹¹⁶ Significantly, notwithstanding the extensive efforts of all of these rulers, the reforms failed. In all cases, the pushback was too great from the powerful parties that threatened to lose the most. The drastic measures taken by all of these sultanates highlight the untenable nature of the traditional patronage arrangements between sovereigns and notables that had evolved over the course of the fifteenth century. The Aqquyunlu, too, were particularly susceptible to these tensions and the financial strains that they placed upon the central administration. Like their neighbors, Aqquyunlu sultans and their leading administrators were keenly aware of the dangers posed by this substantial loss to its tax base and on two

¹¹³ For the effects of these pressures on Ottoman monetary policy, see Şevket Pamuk, *A Monetary History of the Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 40–58.

¹¹⁴ Ömer Lütfi Barkan, "Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda bir İskan ve Kolonizasyon Metodu Olarak Vakıflar ve Temlikler," *Vakıflar Dergisi* 2 (1942): 279–386; Halil İnalçık, "Mehmed II," *İslam Ansiklopedisi*; Vera Moutafchieva, *Agrarian Relations in the Ottoman Empire in the 15th and 16th Centuries* (Boulder, CO: Eastern European Monographs, 1988); for an analysis that emphasizes the fiscal nature of these reforms, see Oktay Özel, "Limits of the Almighty."

¹¹⁵ Daisuke Igarashi, "The Financial Reforms of Sultan Qāyṭbāy" *Mamluk Studies Review* 13, 1 (2009): 27–51; Igarashi, *Land Tenure, Fiscal Policy, and Imperial Power*, 153–55.

¹¹⁶ Subtelny, "Centralizing Reform and Its Opponents," 139–51; Subtelny, *Timurids in Transition*, 89–95.

occasions in the 1480s and 1490s initiated two major reforms to the tax system by targeting special land grants such as the *suyurghal*.¹¹⁷

Bidlisi's personal prose collection stands testament to the extensive use of privileges bestowed on prominent members of the urban notable class. The disbursal of these special privileges and grants to members of the urban notable class, as well as its own central administration, underscores the key alliance that the Turkmen rulers necessarily forged with the leading elements of civilian society. Even as these programs of patronage constituted a fundamental aspect of Aqqyunlu policy, they also served to undermine the basic revenue sources of the central administration.

The first effort to reform the Aqqyunlu land regime occurred in the final years of Ya'qub's reign. In 1489, the sultan's chief adviser Qazi 'Isa Savaji conceived of a plan to expand the agrarian tax base of the central administration by couching it in terms of a repeal of the Mongol-era urban commercial tax (*tamghavat*). The rationale for this shift focused on the noncanonical nature of the commercial tax and represented a desire on the part of the Aqqyunlu court to bring its administration in line with sacred tradition (*shari'a*). Bidlisi's colleague in the chancery, Fazlullah Khunji-Isfahani, notes in his history of Ya'qub's reign that the imposition of the urban commercial tax was a remnant of the legal code of Chinggis Khan (*yasa-yi Changizkhani*), which had corrupted the application of "the pure-flowing precepts of right faith."¹¹⁸ According to Khunji-Isfahani, at the time of Sultan Ya'qub's reign, these corrupt commercial taxes represented the largest source of revenue for the central administration.¹¹⁹ While Qazi 'Isa may have initiated these reforms in order to bring the state administration into greater conformity with sacred law, he likely intended that the new tax base of the central state strengthen the efficacy of the central administration in relation to the Turkmen confederate clans and urban notable class.¹²⁰

Bidlisi's specific role in this reform movement remains obscure, but his sympathy for Qazi 'Isa's plan is evident both through his close relationship with the chief minister and the positive assessment of his policies. By the latter years of Ya'qub's reign, Bidlisi had comfortably situated himself

¹¹⁷ I. P. Petrushevskii, "Vnutrenniaia politika Akhmeda Ak-Koiunlu," in *Sbornik statei po istorii Azerbaidzhana*, I (Baku 1949), 144–52; Minorsky, "The Aq-Qoyunlu and Land Reforms."

¹¹⁸ Faḡl Allāh ibn Rūzbihān Khunjī-Isfahānī, *Tārīkh-i 'ālam-ārā-yi amīnī*, ed. John E. Woods, revised and augmented (London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1992), 355.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Woods, *Aqqyunlu*, 144.

within the most influential and powerful palace clique. As both the chief military judge and chief financial minister, Qazi 'Isa had accumulated considerable power within Ya'qub's administration, which he exercised and consolidated through the appointment of close friends and relatives to high posts: He made his brother-in-law Sharaf al-Din Mahmud Daylami, the finance officer (*vazir*) and inspector (*mushrif*) of the royal council,¹²¹ while he appointed his nephew, Mahmud's son, Najm al-Din Mas'ud, *parvanachi* (secretary responsible for the production of titles of investiture).¹²² Bidlisi, who by this point may have risen to the rank of state secretary, was also within Qazi 'Isa's orbit. Indeed, Bidlisi exhibited particular attachment to both Qazi 'Isa and Najm al-Din Mas'ud, as demonstrated, for instance, in his dedication of a work on the nature of the soul and to Qazi 'Isa.¹²³ In fact, it is likely that Qazi 'Isa orchestrated Bidlisi's rise in the chancery. Khunji-Isfahani, who joined the Aqqyunlu chancery midway through Ya'qub's reign, complained of the coterie of untalented poets around the chief military judge.¹²⁴ While the insult was largely intended as an indictment of Qazi 'Isa's misplaced attention on nonadministrative matters, Khunji-Isfahani's mention of the circle of poets – including, no doubt, Bidlisi – around the chief adviser suggests the central role played by the judge not only in the administrative realm, but also in the cultural life of the court.

Qazi 'Isa's plans for reform initially focused on 'Iraq-i 'Ajam and Fars. He appointed Mahmud Daylami and his brother Shaykh 'Ali to head a commission, the central purpose of which was to produce a cadastral survey of 'Iraq-i 'Ajam and Fars, as well as regularize taxable items. The two commissioners dispatched heralds who announced that the *suyurghals* of these regions were suspended and future payments to their beneficiaries should cease until the commission had assessed the land. Even as the reforms ostensibly sought to harmonize Aqqyunlu tax policy with the shari'a, the strongest objections to the reforms emanated from the ranks of the scholarly class. As major beneficiaries of *suyurghal* grants, they certainly had much to lose. Khunji-Isfahani acknowledges that he personally implored Shaykh 'Ali to modify the policy on behalf of many of the great scholars of Shiraz. Similarly, scholars from Fars including Jalal al-Din

¹²¹ Jean Aubin, "L'avènement des Safavides reconsidéré," *Moyen Orient & Océan Indien*, XVIe-XIXe s. 5 (1988): 63.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Idrīs Bidlīsī, *Risālat al-naḥs*, Manchester, John Rylands Library Ms. Arabic 403 [385].

¹²⁴ Khunji-Isfahānī, *Tārīkh-i 'ālam-ārā-yi amīnī*, 351.

Davani, Abu Yazid Davani, and Muhammad Muhyavi appealed directly to Qazi 'Isa.¹²⁵ The hagiography of İbrahim Gülşeni notes that the Sufi master successfully intervened on behalf of the children of the renowned dervish Dede 'Umar Rushani.¹²⁶ Concern for the abrogation of *suyurghals* was rooted in its relationship to religious endowments. Khunji-Isfahani remarks that as a consequence of the commission's seizure of *suyurghals* from the learned class, most of the charitable funds (*abwab al-khayr*) and Sufi lodges were forced to close.¹²⁷

The outcry against the reforms reached a breaking point before their complete realization. While Shaykh 'Ali and Sharaf al-Din Mahmud were surveying and confiscating tax exemptions in Shiraz, Sultan Ya'qub succumbed to illness at his winter camp in Qarabagh. The governor of Shiraz arrested Shaykh 'Ali and returned him to Tabriz where he was subjected to torture.¹²⁸ Similarly, Qazi 'Isa was arrested four days after the death of Ya'qub and subsequently hanged,¹²⁹ while Najm al-Din Mas'ud escaped briefly before he too was apprehended and executed.¹³⁰ In addition to this bloodletting, the reaction to the reforms precipitated their complete reversal and ultimately a reaffirmation of the rights of the *suyurghal*-holders.

Despite the general backlash to the reforms, Bidlisi's assessment of Qazi 'Isa's policy indicates approval of his friend's efforts to bring the Aqqyunlu tax regime in line with the *shari'a*. Later in life, while residing in Ottoman domains during Bayezid's reign, Bidlisi collected the poetry of these two friends and colleagues in a single volume and added a preface that celebrated his bonds of affection and loyalty with them. In the preface, Bidlisi emphasizes the efforts of his two deceased colleagues to implement policies in accordance with the precepts of faith.¹³¹ In Qazi 'Isa's official activities, he notes that his friend always "implemented the affairs of state in such a

¹²⁵ Minorsky, "The Aq-Qoyunlu and Land Reforms," 454.

¹²⁶ Muhyi-yi Gülşenî, *Menâkıb-i İbrâhîm-i Gülşenî*, 176–78; for a detailed biography of İbrahim Gülşeni, see Side Emre, *Ibrahim-i Gulshani and the Khalwati-Gulshani Order: Power Brokers in Ottoman Egypt* (Leiden: Brill, 2017).

¹²⁷ Khunji-Isfahani, *Tārīkh-i 'ālam-ārā-yi amīnī*, 373.

¹²⁸ V. Minorsky, "The Aq-Qoyunlu and Land Reforms," 454.

¹²⁹ Woods, *The Aqqyunlu*, 151–52.

¹³⁰ Bidlisi, *Dīvān-i Qāzī 'Isā va Najm al-Dīn Mas'ūd*, Istanbul, Atatürk Kitaplığı, Ms. Muallim Cevdet 121, 9a.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 6a.

way that the virtues of the great scholars of the community were present and gathered in his ordering of religiously-concordant edicts.”¹³²

The economic reforms initiated by Qazi ‘Isa not only affected the livelihood of the learned class, but also posed a direct threat to the power base of the Turkmen confederate clans. During the reign of Ya‘qub, appointments to provincial governorships increasingly shifted from an appanage system favored in the reign of Uzun Hasan to a system of provincial administration that favored the confederate clan chieftains. The provincial power bases established by these clan leaders facilitated increasing involvement on the part of the confederates in the dynastic politics of the late Aqqyunlu state. The economic consequences of Qazi ‘Isa’s overhaul of the land tenure system threatened to undermine the provincial power base of the confederate clans and likely contributed to their desire to exercise greater influence in the central administration. The death of Ya‘qub followed shortly by the execution of Qazi ‘Isa and Najm al-Din Mas‘ud clearly represents a complete rejection of the land reforms orchestrated by this leading faction of the central administration.

As a close friend of Qazi ‘Isa and Najm al-Din Mas‘ud, Bidlisi’s position at court must have been threatened during the subsequent civil war that erupted in the wake of Ya‘qub’s death. Indeed, the next ten years of Aqqyunlu dynastic politics were dominated by conflicts between all of the Bayandur claimants to the throne, many of whom were manipulated and backed by powerful leaders from the various confederate clans. Bidlisi would later characterize the period following Ya‘qub’s death as “a storm of strife and tumult throughout the lands.”¹³³ The violence and reversals of fortune by the various branches of the Bayandur clan and their confederate allies prompted Bidlisi’s father to remove himself from the Aqqyunlu court and ultimately seek refuge from the raining “meteorites of misfortune in the Bayandurid domains” through a pilgrimage to Mecca.¹³⁴ In contrast, based upon the evidence of Bidlisi’s prose collection, it seems that he remained in the service of Ya‘qub’s nine-year-old son and heir, Baysunghur, during the initial stage of the young sultan’s rule.¹³⁵ Yet negotiating the palace and clan politics of this period was fraught with considerable difficulties, as two competing Turkmen factions changed positions of dominance midway through Baysunghur’s two-year reign.

¹³² Ibid., 7b.

¹³³ Bidlisi, *Dīvān-i Qāzī ‘Isā va Najm al-Dīn Mas‘ūd*, 9a.

¹³⁴ Ḥusām al-Dīn ‘Alī Bidlīsī, *Jāmi’ al-tanzīl*, Ms. Şehid Ali Paşa 109, 2a.

¹³⁵ Ebū’l-Faẓl Meḥmed, *Inshā*, 10a.

During the latter stages of this confusing and violent period, Bidlisi managed to withdraw himself completely from the political intrigue around the sultan in Tabriz, for at the time of Baysunghur's replacement on the throne with Rustam ibn Maqsud in May 1492, he was residing in Shiraz and enjoying the regular company of the great scholar of that city, Jalal al-Din Davani.¹³⁶

In several ways, the emergence of Rustam as sultan marked a complete repudiation of Qazi 'Isa's policies in the final years of Ya'qub's reign. During his years on the throne, Rustam adopted a conciliatory position with many of the Sufi orders and other segments of the religious establishment.¹³⁷ On the level of administrative personnel, Rustam's efforts at rapprochement also extended to leading elements of Ya'qub's administration.¹³⁸ In all likelihood, Rustam also invited Bidlisi to return, for, by May 1495, Bidlisi was a member of the new sultan's council in Tabriz.¹³⁹ Despite his willingness to work for Rustam, Bidlisi largely assessed his reign negatively. In fact, in his history, he neglects to relate any specific policy of Rustam and simply points out that the sultan reigned for six years during which time his rule/fortune (*dawlat*) deteriorated as a consequence of the sultan's inactive approach to rule, which led to "various financial deficiencies and every sort of error in the undertaking of royal matters."¹⁴⁰

Certainly, there were several key elements of the Aqquyunlu military and civilian elite that remained unhappy with the new sultan's reign. This opposition coalesced in 1496 around the leadership of Nur 'Ali Bayandur and a number of disaffected confederate clan military leaders and urban notables who applied to the Ottomans for material support in a bid to oust Rustam. While Bidlisi, in his later writings, does not specifically include himself in the opposition faction, his general appraisal of Rustam's reign as well as his subsequent role in the sultan's downfall suggest his sympathy for their project, if not outright participation.

¹³⁶ Vural Genç, "Acem'den Rum'a," 97–8. Bidlīsī, *Hasht bihisht*, SK, Esad Efendi 2198, 269b.

¹³⁷ Woods, *The Aqquyunlu*, 156.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 155.

¹³⁹ On this date, Bidlisi was one of the signatories of a document produced by Rustam's council. For a description of this document, see Jean Aubin, "Notes sur quelques documents Aq Qoyunlu (Archives persanes commentées)," in *Mélanges Massignon* (Damascus, 1956), 139–41.

¹⁴⁰ Bidlisi, *HB*, 516a.

The nature of Nur 'Ali's appeal was contingent upon Bayezid II's relationship with Ahmad ibn Ughurlu Muhammad, a grandson of Uzun Hasan who had been born and raised in the Ottoman court, and, in the estimation of Nur 'Ali and the other notables, represented the best chance to replace the disastrous rule of Rustam with another Bayandurid prince. Ahmad's father, Ughurlu Muhammad, sought refuge at the court of Mehmed II after his failed rebellion against his own aging father, Uzun Hasan, in 1474. Mehmed honored the Bayandurid prince with the offer of his daughter, Gevher, in marriage to Ughurlu Muhammad.¹⁴¹ Ahmad was the product of this marriage, but he hardly knew his father since Ughurlu Muhammad was killed in 1477 in the wake of an ill-advised bid to claim the Aqquyunlu throne from Uzun Hasan. He was raised in the Ottoman court where he received the care and attention befitting a claimant to the Aqquyunlu throne and a nephew of Bayezid.¹⁴² Indeed, the Ottoman sultan clearly felt a strong familial bond with the young prince as he frequently addressed Ahmad as his dear son (*farzand-i arjumand*) in official correspondence and offered his daughter 'Aynışah Sultan in marriage to him.¹⁴³

Despite these strong ties with his Ottoman royal relatives, Ahmad, in the words of Bidlisi, "had been driven by his desire for his rightfully inherited sovereignty."¹⁴⁴ The arrival of the embassy of military commanders and urban notables sent from Diyarbakr by Nur 'Ali, no doubt fanned the flames of this desire, as it assured Ahmad that a broad coalition of support would welcome his return, as, with his triumph, "these lands (Iran) would become united with those lands (Ottoman lands) and nothing other than fraternity will prevail and the affairs of this land will be eased as he (Sultan Ahmad) has been raised in the shadow of the just emperor (Bayezid)."¹⁴⁵ The appeal was successful, as Ahmad left Istanbul shortly thereafter and met Nur 'Ali and an army of supporters at Erzincan before proceeding on to defeat Rustam in the summer of 1497.

¹⁴¹ M. Çağatay Uluçay, *Padışahların kadınları ve kızları* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1980).

¹⁴² See, for instance, reference to the monthly stipend he drew as a member of the Ottoman court, TSMA D. 9587, 3. Barkan dates the register to 900/1494, Ömer Lütfi Barkan, "H. 933-934 (M. 1527-1528) Mali Yılına âit bir bütçe örneği," *İstanbul Üniversitesi İktisat Fakültesi Mecmuası* 15 (1953-54): 308.

¹⁴³ Sarı 'Abdullāh Efendi, *Munsha'ât-i fārsī*, 62b. On the marriage of Ahmad bin Ughurlu Muhammad with 'Aynışah Sultan, see Uluçay, *Padışahların kadınları ve kızları*, 24-5 and Çağatay Uluçay, "Bayazid II.'in Ailesi," *Tarih Dergisi* 10, 14 (1959): 119.

¹⁴⁴ Bidlisi, *HB*, 516a.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid. Ferīdūn Beğ, *Münşe'ât*, 1:331.

If Bidlisi was not among the supporters who met Ahmad in Erzincan, he was certainly in the new sultan's employment in the immediate wake of Ahmad's triumphal entry into Tabriz. Sultan Ahmad ordered Bidlisi to compose the victory proclamation that was sent to Bayezid shortly after his enthronement. The letter was conceived as an opportunity to inform the Ottoman sultan of his son-in-law's success and to thank him for the support Ahmad had received in his own upbringing and bid for sovereignty. To that end, Bidlisi emphasizes the young sultan's rearing "through the grace of the fatherly care and affection" of Bayezid and thanks the Ottoman sultan for "attending to the lofty zeal of His Majesty (Ahmad)." ¹⁴⁶ In addition to this praise of Bayezid's paternal and royal affection towards Ahmad, Bidlisi embeds the news of the prince's victory in a discourse concerning the necessity and nature of rule that would become a hallmark of his later writings among the Ottomans. After several Quranic citations and a poem, the letter opens with a brief discussion of how rule is established in the world through God's desire to ensure that governance remains a reflection of the message carried by the prophet Muhammad. As a consequence of this desire, God established the seat of rule through His creation of a vicegerent in the world (*sarir-i rutbat-i sharafa-yi inni ja'il fi'l-ard khalifa*). Ahmad's upbringing in the shadow of a ruler who so clearly reflected this message prepared him for his assumption of these duties when he set out to claim sovereignty. ¹⁴⁷ For Bidlisi, the link between vicegerency and *shar'i*-minded governance was explicit, and, indeed, closely related to Ottoman approaches to administration. Several narrative sources, including *The Eight Paradises*, emphasize the Ottoman influence of Ahmad's upbringing on the policies he sought to implement during his short reign. Bidlisi's assessment of Ahmad's reign focuses on the ruler's just policies: "in contrast to the emperor Rustam, Ahmad completely concerned himself with the administration of affairs and finance and consideration for the troops and the army." ¹⁴⁸ Moreover, Bidlisi notes that Ahmad undertook reforms in accordance with sacred tradition (*shari'a*), while "in the implementation of just laws he imitated the example of Sultan Bayezid." ¹⁴⁹ This dual emphasis on a return to *shar'i*-oriented administration coupled with the establishment of new just laws appealed to Bidlisi in light of his experiences working under Qazi 'Isa, as

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 1:334, 335.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Bidlisi, *HB*, 516b.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

well as his more recent experiences during the tumultuous and chaotic civil war.

Most likely, they also referred to Bidlisi's approval of the reforms initiated by Ahmad, the second such effort within the span of a decade. Several other near-contemporary histories suggest that Sultan Ahmad, like his uncle Ya'qub, sought to confiscate tax-exempt land holdings and bring the assessment and taxation of lands as well as the disbursal of stipends into the competence of the central administration.¹⁵⁰ As with Ya'qub almost ten years earlier, the mere suggestion of such a policy produced a strong backlash from the entrenched military and urban notable interests who benefited from the old land regime. Within six months, these policies led to insurrection among the confederate clans, who engaged Ahmad in battle near Isfahan in December 1497. The majority of the Turkmen cavalry defected to the rebels' side and Ahmad and his contingent of Ottoman janissaries were killed on the battlefield.

Bidlisi's personal experiences of these failed reforms and the subsequent turmoil that they inflicted on the Aqqyunlu polity highlight the conflicting loyalties experienced by individual secretaries from among the urban notable class during this period. On the one hand, their personal interests or those of their closest colleagues and friends were frequently threatened by the reclamation of tax exemptions and land grants. On the other hand, as state functionaries, such secretaries embraced a centralizing impulse and, as such, were frequently at the forefront of proposing and implementing these reform policies. Not surprisingly, their efforts relied largely upon rhetorical and ideological appeals to implement governance in conformity with the *shari'a*. Such an appeal offered a potentially unimpeachable rationale for reclaiming alienated land, even if much of this land was held as religiously sanctioned pious endowments. Last, the Aqqyunlu reform efforts of Ahmad's reign highlight the difficulty of implementing "Ottoman" approaches to governance in places where the underlying dynamic between rulers and the ruling elite dictated a more delicate balance of power and privilege, a theme to which we will return in Chapter 3.

More immediately, the defeat of Ahmad plunged Aqqyunlu domains into a deeper state of chaos. In the wake of his death, a number of Bayandur claimants vied for the Aqqyunlu throne in a series of coups

¹⁵⁰ For an analysis of these sources, see Minorsky, "The Aq-Qoyunlu and Land Reforms," 459–62.

and pitched battles.¹⁵¹ The conflict produced no clear victor and led Bidlisi to conclude that the death of Sultan Ahmad, in fact, marked the end of the Aqqyunlu dispensation to rule Iran.¹⁵² The sultan's death and the subsequent civil war within the Aqqyunlu tribal confederation also precipitated the rise of a radical messianic figure to political power in Iran. Although Bidlisi weathered the initial rise of Isma'il and his effective seizure of power in Azerbaijan in 1501, the near constant political turmoil weighed heavily upon Bidlisi's professional and private life and led to a crisis of conscience that prompted his departure from his homeland for the Ottoman court of Bayezid II.

¹⁵¹ Woods, *The Aqqyunlu*, 158–61.

¹⁵² Bidlisi, *HB*, 517a.

Patronage and Place among the Ottomans

Bidlisi and the Court of Bayezid II, 1502–1511

The rise of Shah Isma‘il in Iran in 1501 eventually prompted Bidlisi to make one of the most important decisions of his life. Bidlisi’s exile and migration from Tabriz to Ottoman lands in the following year initiated a fundamental change in the professional trajectory of his life. On a personal level, the loss of his friends, family, and homeland, as well as the sense of alienation he felt in a foreign land remained important themes throughout all of his subsequent autobiographical written remarks. On a professional level, the challenges associated with finding a secure and prosperous footing among the Ottomans represented the most fundamental challenge to Bidlisi’s life between 1502 and 1506.

Bidlisi met these challenges largely through considerable literary production and efforts to cultivate ties with leading Ottoman statesmen, and members of the dynasty. Over the course of this decade, he composed his monumental history of the Ottoman Sultanate, *The Eight Paradises*, as well as a number of shorter works that were intended to ingratiate him with members of the Ottoman dynasty. Similarly, throughout this period he sought to cultivate ties with Ottoman statesmen and scholars who were in a position to help advance his career prospects at the Ottoman court. Despite these efforts, his expectations for advancement at the Ottoman court were never fully realized. Feeling marginalized and exploited, Bidlisi requested permission to make a pilgrimage to Mecca in 1511.

Muslim rulers’ patronage of scholars and their works facilitated the movement of independent scholars among Muslim polities and the free circulation of political ideas throughout the fifteenth century. The consolidation of Ottoman rule in Anatolia and the Balkans, especially after the conquest of Constantinople in 1453, intensified the lively competition for

the attention of prominent scholars that had already existed among Timurid, Turkmen, and Mamluk rulers. The emergence of the Ottomans as a significant political force in the second half of the fifteenth century had far-reaching consequences in the cultural realm as well. Sultan Mehmed II's successful efforts to attract prominent men of learning such as 'Ali Qushji, as well as less successful attempts to lure 'Abd al-Rahman Jami and Jalal al-Din Davani, suggest a concerted Ottoman effort to settle the best and the brightest thinkers of the age in Ottoman domains.¹ In some ways, Bidlisi's migration to Ottoman lands can be understood within this larger politico-cultural complex. The uncertain and dire political situation in Tabriz in 1501 contributed to his decision to flee Iran, but the promise of patronage informed his decision to head to Sultan Bayezid's court.

Bidlisi's effort to secure patrons upon his arrival in Ottoman lands was largely motivated by his desire to obtain a worthy rank in his new residence. He had spent the better part of his career working within the Aqqyunlu chancery and, in that environment, had risen to one of the highest positions of state. In this regard, Bidlisi offered potential patrons his rhetorical gifts and literary talents in exchange for patronage and, by extension, an honored place at court. Bidlisi's significant literary production, which included the composition of *The Eight Paradises*, as well as at least six other significant works and numerous panegyrics dedicated to members of the Ottoman dynasty, underscores his efforts to secure a bright professional future for himself in Ottoman lands.

FLIGHT FROM THE NEST OF THE OPPRESSIVE TURKS

Bidlisi decided to emigrate from Iran in the midst of political upheaval and natural disasters that amounted to a level of violence and destruction in

¹ Franz Babinger first noted this tendency in his biography of Mehmed II (Franz Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror and His Time*, ed. William C. Hickman, trans. Ralph Manheim, 2nd edition [Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992]); for a detailed analysis of this migration, see Hanna Sohrweide, "Dichter Und Gelehrte Aus Dem Osten Im Osmanischen Reich (1453–1600)," *Der Islam* 46 (1970): 263–302; Ertuğrul Ökten, "Scholarly Mobility: A Preliminary Assessment from the Perspective of *al-Shaqāyiq al-Nu'māniyya*," *JOS* 41 (2013): 55–70; Atçıl, *Scholars and Sultans*, 64.

Persian lands of near apocalyptic proportions.² The rise of Isma‘il, no doubt, fueled further the apocalyptic tenor of the age. After all, Isma‘il rose to political power in Iran from his position as spiritual leader of the Safaviya Sufi order, which, since the mid-fifteenth century, unified radical Shi‘i, Sufi, and Tucko-Mongol beliefs and practices that attracted the militarized Turkmen clans of western Iran and Anatolia. Such beliefs, termed *ghuluww* (exaggeration) by their numerous critics, espoused a veneration of ‘Ali as a manifestation of God in human form and embraced metempsychosis (*tanasukh*) to proclaim the reincarnation of the prophets, ‘Ali, and the subsequent Shi‘i imams.³ Both beliefs are reflected clearly in Isma‘il’s poetry, in which he proclaims himself variously Adam, ‘Ali, and the Truth (*Haqq*, i.e., God).

Because Bidlisi’s departure more or less coincided with Isma‘il’s capture of Tabriz and the beginning of the young Safavi shaykh’s efforts to consolidate political authority in Azerbaijan, most contemporary scholars have understood Bidlisi’s emigration from Tabriz solely in relation to the rise of Isma‘il.⁴ While in later years, Bidlisi would allude to the spread of the Safavi apostasy under Isma‘il as a contributing factor in his decision to leave Iran, his earlier writings, completed in the immediate aftermath of these events, dwell entirely on a more general sense of despair engendered by years of misrule, violent political discord, famine, and plague. Moreover, in the four years preceding Isma‘il’s arrival in Tabriz, the prestigious capital had exchanged hands seven times among the various Bayandurid claimants to the throne and their Aqqyunlu confederate clan supporters; given this political turmoil, there was little reason for the residents of Tabriz to have assumed in 1501 that this latest conqueror would last long in power.⁵

² In a work written in 1503, Bidlisi alludes to the upheaval of his own time as a sign of the coming end times (*akhir-i zaman*), see Bidlīsī, *Mir’āt al-jamāl*, Nuruosmaniye Ms. 4241, 9b.

³ Michel Mazzaoui, *The Origins of the Safawids, Shi‘ism, and the Ghulat* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1972); Irène Melikoff, “L’Hétérodoxe en Anatolie: non-conformisme—syncretisme—gnose,” *Turcica* 14 (1982): 141–54; Adel Allouche, *The Origins and Development of the Ottoman-Safavid Conflict (906–62/1500–55)* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz, 1983), 30–64; Kathryn Babayan, “The Safavid Synthesis: From Qizilbash Islam to Imamite Shi‘ism,” *Iranian Studies* 27, 1–4 (1994), 135–37.

⁴ A notable exception in this regard is the work of Vural Genç, who suggests that Bidlisi initially welcomed Shah Isma‘il to Tabriz and may have briefly entered the new ruler’s service (Vural Genç, “Şah ile Sultan arasında bir Acem Bürokratı: İdris-i Bidlīsī’nin Şah İsmail’in Himayesine Girme Çabası,” *JOS* 46 (2015), 43–74).

⁵ Aubin, *Moyen Orient & Océan Indien*, 69.

Indeed, Isma'il's entry into Tabriz in 1501 was improbable on account of the young shaykh's age – he was fourteen at the time – as well as in consideration of the relatively modest military force that his movement had hitherto attracted.⁶ The movement benefited from the spiritual authority inherited from his forebear, the eponymous founder of the Safaviya order, Safi al-Din. Moreover, since the militant and messianic turn of the order under the leadership of Isma'il's grandfather, Junayd, the Safaviya also attracted large numbers of Turkmen followers. Despite direct conflict with the Aqqyunlu and Shirvanshahs that led to the deaths of both Junayd and Ismail's father, Haydar, the movement capitalized on the political disorder in western Iran after the death of Sultan Ahmad and in a string of victories beginning in 1500 opened the way to Tabriz. Despite Isma'il's early victories, the young shaykh's position in Tabriz remained precarious. In fact, in the following year, Isma'il may have lost control of the city and later in the year was forced to engage the Bayandurid prince Sultan-Murad, who approached from Hamadan with a numerically superior force.⁷

Bidlisi likely viewed the political emergence of Shah Isma'il against the backdrop of these complicated events, all of which brought various reversals of fortune, yet signaled no clear and lasting victor. Certainly, this is how a number of high-ranking functionaries of the Aqqyunlu Sultanate interpreted events in the first years of Shah Isma'il's reign. With the change in the prevailing political winds, a number of these functionaries simply accepted posts within Isma'il's nascent administration. In 1501–02, Sharaf al-Din Mahmud Daylami, Bidlisi's old colleague in the chancery since Ya'qub's reign, became Isma'il's vizier, possibly as a shared appointment with Amir Zakariya, another recent recruit from among the Aqqyunlu civilian functionaries.⁸ The appointment of Sharaf al-Din Mahmud afforded Bidlisi an opportunity to reconcile with Shah Isma'il, for some time after the new vizier's appointment, Bidlisi wrote to his old friend and asked for his intercession with Isma'il.⁹ The underlying request of the intercession is relatively ambiguous – it may plausibly signal a

⁶ Contemporary Venetian sources, like the subsequent Safavid chronicles, tend to emphasize the relatively small numbers of troops available to Isma'il in the earliest years of his bid for power. According to one report, Isma'il had 6,000 men in 1502 and 8,000 in 1503, *ibid.*, 32.

⁷ Woods, *The Aqqyunlu*, 163; for the relative strengths of Isma'il and Sulṭān-Murād's forces, see Aubin, "L'avènement des Safavides reconsidéré," 32.

⁸ Mitchell, *The Practice of Politics*, 27–28.

⁹ Bidlisi, *Majmū'a*, Ms. Esad Efendi 1888, 148b.

request on Bidlisi's part to be appointed to Isma'il's administration or alternatively a desire to set out on some other unstated path.¹⁰ In the very least, Bidlisi's appeal to Sharaf al-Din Mahmud demonstrates some willingness on his part to maintain a peaceful coexistence with the young messianic ruler while he exercised control over Tabriz.

This willingness was reconcilable with Bidlisi's own confessional disposition. Like many men of his generation, Bidlisi espoused intellectual and spiritual fealty to elements of both Sunni and Shi'i traditions. In his later political writings among the Ottomans, he recognized equally the political and spiritual preeminence of both the four rightly guided caliphs and the twelve imams.¹¹ Similarly, like his father, he professed a profound reverence for the Shi'i messianic-Sufi Muhammad Nurbakhsh, yet also penned Quranic exegetical commentaries within the Sunni Shafi'i tradition.¹² From this ambiguous confessional perspective, the arrival of Shah Isma'il – even if it necessitated an espousal of radical Alid rhetoric – likely posed no insurmountable challenge to Bidlisi's worldview on a spiritual level. In this sense, we may interpret Bidlisi's objections to Shah Isma'il – whatever they were – as essentially political.

On a political level, Isma'il's early policies in Tabriz were certainly threatening to a great many scholars. Yet even here, the turmoil precipitated by Isma'il's arrival also may be understood within the broader context of increasing political instability in Iran. Certainly, Bidlisi was not the only prominent scholar to despair of the deteriorating political situation in western Iran and immigrate to more secure and prosperous lands during these years. Persian scholars left home and settled in new lands throughout the latter half of the fifteenth century. In some ways the mobility of scholars had been a common feature of the social and intellectual landscape of the central lands of Islam for centuries.¹³ Yet the political upheavals of the latter half of the fifteenth century, as well as the emergence of new opportunities for patronage, especially in Ottoman domains, intensified the phenomenon.¹⁴ Scholars still migrated in search of

¹⁰ Genç interprets Bidlisi's poem to Sharaf al-Din Mahmud as a clear request to enter Shah Isma'il's service, Genç, "Acem'den Rum'a," 111.

¹¹ See, for instance, Bidlisi's remarks on the twelve imams in Bidlīsī, *Mir'āt al-jamāl*, SK Ms. Esad Efendi 1888, 4b–5a.

¹² For Bidlisi's commentary, see Bidlīsī, *Hāshiya 'alā anwār al-tanzīl*.

¹³ On the relationship between travel and scholarship, see Houari Touati, *Islam and Travel in the Middle Ages* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010).

¹⁴ For a detailed discussion of scholars' immigration to Ottoman lands during this period, see Sohrweide, "Dichter Und Gelehrte."

knowledge, but increasingly such quests were necessitated by disturbances at home and made all the more profitable by the promise of patronage abroad.¹⁵

While a number of scholars clearly left Iran as a result of Shah Isma‘il’s seizure of Tabriz, the phenomenon of scholarly emigration during these years should be understood within the context of the quickly evolving and complex political and social environment that prevailed within Aqqyunlu domains in the last years of the fifteenth century. The instability of this period encouraged a number of scholars to emigrate or remain abroad even before the emergence of Shah Isma‘il. Bidlisi’s own father, Husam al-Din ‘Ali, considered fleeing Aqqyunlu domains after the death of Sultan Ya‘qub as a consequence of the political turmoil, but was dissuaded by his friends who suggested that travel during this period of uncertainty was perhaps more dangerous than remaining at home.¹⁶ Despite these dangers, other scholars and statesmen did indeed emigrate. For instance, the poet Basiri chose to remain in Ottoman lands after completing a diplomatic mission on behalf of Ahmad ibn Ughurlu Muhammad in 1497.¹⁷ Similarly, one of Bidlisi’s Sufi mentors, Baba Ni‘matullah Nakhjavani, fled Azerbaijan after Ahmad’s death in late 1497 and settled in Akşehir in Karaman.¹⁸ Moreover, many other scholars wrestled with the decision to flee Shah Isma‘il or reconcile their beliefs with the emerging regime. Many of the most prominent administrators of the Aqqyunlu court joined Shah Isma‘il’s cause in the first decade of the sixteenth century.¹⁹ In addition to Sharaf al-Din Mahmud Daylami, another friend and Aqqyunlu colleague, Amir ‘Abd al-Vahhab, initially rejected Shah Isma‘il’s seizure of power and sought refuge in the court of Sultan-Husayn Bayqara in Herat. In the 1480s, Amir ‘Abd al-Vahhab had assumed his father’s position as minister of religious affairs (*shaykh al-islam*) in Tabriz after his father’s death. He continued in this office until the rise of Shah Isma‘il in 1501, at which point he fled to Sultan-Husayn. After the death of the Timurid sultan in 1506, ‘Abd al-Vahhab

¹⁵ Sohrweide, “Dichter Und Gelehrte,” 268; Atçıl, *Scholars and Sultans*, 65–6.

¹⁶ ‘Ali Bidlisi, *Jāmi’ al-tawwīl wa al-ta’wīl*, Ms. Şehid Ali Paşa 109, 2a.

¹⁷ Sehî, *Tezkire-i Sehî*, ed. Mehmed Şükrü, vol. 1 (Istanbul: Maṭba‘a-ı Âmidî, 1325), 116.

¹⁸ Bidlisi met with Baba Ni‘mat Allah in 1513 after a period of fifteen-years separation, Bidlisi, *Haqq al-mubîn*, 6a. This would suggest they last saw one another around 1498, while Bidlisi still resided in Tabriz.

¹⁹ Mitchell, *The Practice of Politics in Safavid Iran*, 28–29.

made peace with Shah Isma‘il and resumed his position as *shaykh al-islam* in Tabriz.²⁰

Not surprisingly then, in the early years after his emigration from Tabriz, Bidlisi’s memory of the period focused not on Isma‘il as heretical ruler, but on the general despair engendered by the misrule of Turkmen war lords and the political and social upheaval that their actions wrought. In the preface to a work he presented to Sultan Bayezid shortly after his arrival in Ottoman lands, Bidlisi remarked that with the death of Sultan Ya‘qub, Aqqyunlu domains entered into a dark period of injustice that precipitated the swift destruction and replacement of one ruler with another.²¹ The instability and mayhem that ensued encouraged him to consider fleeing his homeland, a thought that he described ten years later in 1512 in the following terms:

In accordance with the vicissitudes of perfidious fate, I obligatorily decided to vacate my homeland and emigrate from my country. After the banishment of good thinking, I was made to flee from the nest of the oppressive Turks into the never-ending wilderness of strange grief and flight. I was afflicted with separation from the people of my country and homeland, which became the battlefield of disasters and discord and migrated from my residence, which was the dwelling of one hundred sorts of calamities and misfortunes.²²

In this assessment of the Iranian political landscape and its effects on Bidlisi’s departure from Tabriz, Shah Isma‘il and his activities seem to represent for Bidlisi simply the latest iteration in the “succession of rulings by tyrannous kings and governors.”²³ Indeed, such an appraisal would help explain his departure from Tabriz in 1502 as opposed to the previous year when Isma‘il first entered Tabriz.²⁴ It is likely that Bidlisi, along with a great many residents of Tabriz, held out hope that the emergence of Isma‘il would remain a passing temporary disturbance, albeit one that

²⁰ On ‘Abd al-Vahhab’s life, see Hamid Algar, “Naqshbandis and Safavids: A Contribution to the Religious History of Iran and Her Neighbors,” in *Safavid Iran and Her Neighbors*, ed. Michel Mazzaoui (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2003), 9–13; the best near contemporary historical accounts of his life are contained in Karbalā‘ī Tabrizī, *Rawzāt al-jinān va-jamāt al-janān*, 1:215–17; and Kh‘āndamīr, *Tārīkh-i ḥabīb al-siyar fī akhbār afrād bashar*, 4:608–9.

²¹ Bidlīsī, *Hāshīya ‘alā anwār al-tanzīl*, 4b–5a.

²² Bidlīsī, *HB*, 7a.

²³ Ibid. Or as he put it during the reign of Bayezid: “Struggles among the kings and governors of Persia succeeded one another,” Bidlīsī, *Hāshīya ‘alā anwār al-tanzīl*, 5a.

²⁴ On the possible dates for Bidlisi’s departure from Tabriz, see Markiewicz, “The Crisis of Rule,” 102, n. 31.

precipitated monumentally violent effects. Such an approach to Bidlisi's initial understanding of the threat posed by Shah Isma'il makes sense, especially when set in relation to the other events of 1502. It was during this second year of Isma'il's residence in Tabriz that the Safavi leader solidified his control over Azerbaijan through a major victory over the Aqquyunlu prince Sultan-Murad near Hamadan.²⁵ Moreover, a major outbreak of the plague in Tabriz as well as widespread famine in western Iran certainly contributed to Bidlisi's assessment that life in his homeland was becoming unbearable.²⁶

This appraisal of Shah Isma'il as simply the latest manifestation of disorder and upheaval in Iran differs markedly from some of Bidlisi's professed positions ten years later. Whereas Bidlisi's works written in the immediate wake of his emigration focus on the general decline toward disorder through Turkmen misrule, his references to Isma'il in the first years of Selim's reign describe Isma'il's religious and political activities as "the predations of the heretics."²⁷ This shift in rhetoric likely reflects the intensified antagonism toward Isma'il within Ottoman circles at the accession of Selim. Accordingly, the change in Bidlisi's thought on this matter developed in tandem not only with events as they unfolded but also with broader religious and political discourses in Ottoman lands. But even in this later more politically charged and doctrinally demanding environment, it is difficult to ascertain Bidlisi's true beliefs regarding the nature of Shah Isma'il's threat. Indeed, as a consequence of his perceived poor treatment in Ottoman lands, after his presentation of *The Eight Paradises* in 1506, Bidlisi initiated communication with leading members of Shah Isma'il's court, and, as late as 1511, he entertained the possibility of a full reconciliation with Shah Isma'il.²⁸ This correspondence, which occurred

²⁵ Woods, *The Aqquyunlu*, 163.

²⁶ Bidlisi interprets the outbreak of famine and plague as a result of the disorder created by the misrule of various Bayandur factions and their confederate clan allies in the wake of Sultan Ahmad bin Ughurlu Muhammad's death (Bidlisi, *HB*, 517a–b); for discussion of Bidlisi's separate epistle on the plague written at the beginning of Selim's reign, see Justin Stearns, "Public Health, the State, and Religious Scholarship: Sovereignty in Idris al-Bidlisi's Arguments for Fleeing the Plague," in *The Scaffolding of Sovereignty*, eds. Zvi Ben-Dor Benite, Stefanos Geroulanos, and Nicole Jerr (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017): 163–85.

²⁷ Bidlisi likens Shah Ismail's followers to the Kharijites (*bi-javarih-i khavarij mamalik hamagi muhlak va mu'lam*), Bidlisi, *HB*, 7a.

²⁸ For an analysis of this communication, see Vural Genç, "Şah ile Sultan Arasında Bir Acem Bürokrati: İdris-i Bidlîsi'nin Şah İsmail'in Himayesine Girmeye Çalışması," *JOS* 46 (2015): 43–75.

even as Bidlisi penned some of his strongest condemnations of the Qizilbash, indicates that, in fact, he held no doctrinally derived animus toward Ismaʿil.²⁹

LONGING AND REGRET IN THE EXTREMITY OF RUM

Bidlisi's decision to emigrate from Tabriz initiated a twofold personal crisis. On one level, his departure signaled the loss of his homeland and the beginning of his residence in a foreign country. Such a loss was thoroughly disorienting and heartbreaking. For the first forty-four years of his life, Bidlisi had prospered both intellectually in the company of his father's friends and associates and professionally at the court of one of the preeminent ruling sultanates of Iran. His arrival in Ottoman lands in 1502 completely upended this life. No longer was professional prosperity assured on the basis of key connections and a long record of service. In a certain sense, Bidlisi had to start over. On a deeper level, the feeling that his homeland had fallen into a state of complete disorder and injustice triggered a personal crisis of conscience.

In the midst of the violent political and social turmoil, Bidlisi reflected on his own professional choices and judged that his abandonment of the Sufi path represented a gross misuse of his energies. Although Bidlisi's entry into sultanate service for Yaʿqub signaled a rejection of the path toward gnostic learning, which his father had introduced to him, Bidlisi was never completely comfortable with his embrace of worldly matters. On several occasions during periods of personal distress and political uncertainty, he returned to this decision and resolved to recommit himself to a life of learning and piety. The chaos of the final years of Aqquyunlu rule was one such period. Suffering and violence precipitated by political upheavals, plagues, and famines conjured a sense of apocalyptic foreboding for many of the witnesses to events in Iran and prompted Bidlisi to reconsider how he had spent his life.³⁰ The chaos in Iran led him to repent "for what eluded me in terms of a desire to take on lofty actions and good works and I grieved for my insolence in spending my life in pursuit of pleasures and mirth."³¹ In the

²⁹ Bidlīsī, *Majmūʿa*, Ms. Esad Efendi 1888, 144a–47a.

³⁰ In several of Bidlisi's works written during the first decade of the sixteenth century, Bidlisi likened the upheaval in Iran with the coming End Time. In *Munazara-yi ruza va ʿid*, Bidlisi describes his departure from his homeland as "flight from the evil of the upheaval of End Time" (Bidlīsī, *Munāzara-yi rūza va ʿid*, SK Ms. Ayasofya 3203, 2a).

³¹ Bidlīsī, *Hāshīya ʿalā anwār al-tanzīl*, 5b.

wake of this realization, he turned once again to his father, “who was my refuge in solving most matters of faith and my asylum in every perplexing matter of intellect and conscience.”³² Husam al-Din ‘Ali considered his son’s predicament and offered him advice that would completely alter the future course of his son’s life. He suggested that Bidlisi rededicate himself to God, first, by undertaking a pilgrimage to Mecca, and second, by seeking refuge with the Ottoman sultan Bayezid II.³³ Although Bidlisi would eventually realize both of his father’s recommendations, he did not prioritize the pilgrimage. Within a few months of having left Tabriz, he was in the middle of Ottoman domains in the Balkans.

When Bidlisi first arrived in Ottoman lands in 1502, he settled for at least one year in Sofia, in what he described as “the extremity of the lands of Rum.”³⁴ This loss of homeland marked the second aspect of Bidlisi’s midlife crisis. Throughout many of his works, but especially those completed in the years immediately following his emigration, he dwelt on the anguish he felt with the loss of his home. For Bidlisi, this loss was most strongly associated with separation from the physical terrain of his homeland and his loved ones who continued to reside there.³⁵ In February 1503 during Bidlisi’s first months of residence in Ottoman lands, he noted the deep pain his emigration caused: “I was afflicted with separation from my young ones and brothers through the imposition of exile from my country and homeland . . . All at once, I was forced to demonstrate forbearance due to the distance from my parents and children and the complete isolation from the homes of loved ones and friends.”³⁶ Although his mother, wife, and children would later join him in Ottoman lands, his first years of residence among the Ottomans were profoundly disorienting.³⁷ Within one year of his arrival at the Ottoman court, Bidlisi

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid., 6b–7a.

³⁴ Bidlisi’s residence in Sofia lasted from at least the middle of February 1502 until sometime in 1502–03 (Bidlisi, *Munāẓara-yi rūza va ‘id*, Ayasofya 3203, 5a/b). Bidlisi, *Sharḥ-i qaṣīda-yi khamrīya*, SK Ms. Ayasofya 4092, 82a; Orhan Başaran, “İdrīs-i Bitlisî’nin Şerḥ-i kasīde-i Hamriyye’si ve iki yazma nüshası,” *Nüsha* 4 (2004): 9. In two works Bidlisi completed shortly after his arrival in Ottoman lands, he describes his residence in Sofia as “the extremity of Rumelia” (Bidlisi, *Sharḥ-i qaṣīda-yi khamrīya*, İstanbul, Millet Kütüphanesi, Ali Emiri Farsi Ms. 134, 5b); Bidlisi, *Munāẓara-yi rūza va ‘id*, 2b.

³⁵ Several of Bidlisi’s earliest works in Ottoman lands dwell upon his separation from family and home. See, for instance, the preface to Bidlisi, *Munāẓara-yi rūza va ‘id*, 2a.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Bidlisi’s mother subsequently immigrated to Ottoman lands, as evidenced by the financial support she received from the Ottoman court, which was recorded in a gift register

received word of his father's death.³⁸ The loss of his teacher, mentor, and guide in all matters fueled further these feelings of loss and intensified notions of his imprisonment to circumstance.

The sentiments expressed in Bidlisi's recollection of these two personal crises reflected the literary tastes and expectations of his learned audience. While there is little doubt that Bidlisi was shaken by the developments in his homeland and saddened by his forced migration, his expression of these feelings channeled the conventional terms of Arabic and Persian belles lettres. The customs of good style in literary expression were rooted in the thought and works of Abbasid-era litterateurs (*adib/udaba'*) whose rhetorical formulations on a wide range of topics were collected in literary anthologies.³⁹ Bidlisi's disparagement of worldly matters (*dhamm al-dunya*), praise for a life of poverty and asceticism (*madh al-faqr*), as well as nostalgia for the homeland (*hanin ila al-awtan*) all correspond to well-established literary themes within the Arabic and Persian literary canon.⁴⁰ Indeed, Bidlisi's association of loss of homeland with separation from friends and family represented one of the most widespread conventions.⁴¹ He was certainly familiar with these anthologies and in fact praises Raghīb Isfahani (d. early eleventh century), one of their most renowned compilers, as the genre's finest practitioner.⁴² Yet even if the presentation of

(*īnamat Defteri*, MC O. 71, p. 402). Bidlisi's wife, Zaynab Khatun, outlived him and established a mosque in the Eyüp district of Istanbul beside which Bidlisi is buried (Hāfiẓ Hüseyni Ayyānsarāyī, *Hadīqatu'l-cevāmi'*, ed. Ali Sati' Bey (İstanbul: Matbaa-i Âmiri, 1281), I, 262–63); Bidlisi also had at least three sons. In addition to Ebu'l-Mevahib and Ebu'l-Fazl Mehmed – both of whom are discussed in later chapters, the same gift register from the reign of Sultan Bayezid II records the death of an unnamed son on July 22, 1509 (İsmail Erünsal, "Türk Edebiyatı Tarihinin Arşiv Kaynakları I: II. Bâyezid devrine ait bir in'âmât defteri," *Tarih Entsitüsü Dergisi* X–XI [1980, 1979]: 327).

³⁸ Bayezid's gift register states that on January 31, 1504, he was offered a gift of fine fabric in consolation for the loss of his father in Iran (*īnamat Defteri*, MC O. 71, p. 33).

³⁹ On Arabic literary anthologies, see Dagmar Riedel, "Searching for the Islamic Episteme: The Status of Historical Information in Medieval Middle-Eastern Anthological Writing" [Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 2004], 9–24; Bilal Orfali, *The Anthologist's Art: Abū Manṣūr al-Tha'ālībī and His Yatīmat al-dahr* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 1–33.

⁴⁰ For instance, Raghīb Isfahani has sections on all three of these topics in his literary anthology (Abū al-Qāsim al-Ḥusayn ibn Muḥammad Rāghib al-Isfahānī, *Muḥāḍarāt al-udabā' wa-muḥāwarāt al-shu'arā' wa-al-bulaghā'*, ed. Riyāḍ 'Abd al-Ḥamīd Murād, 2nd edition [Beirut: Dār Dār Ṣādir, 2006], 2:299, 4:45, 4:587).

⁴¹ Zayde Antrim notes that "the social nurture of kinship networks was closely linked to land, and physical separation from that land often meant physical separation from that source of belonging for both men and women" (Zayde Antrim, *Routes and Realms: The Power of Place in the Early Islamic World* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012], 18).

⁴² Bidlīsī, *HB*, 12a.

his feelings and experiences appears conventional, the underlying sentiments were genuine.⁴³

PATRONAGE AND LITERARY PRODUCTION

Notwithstanding the conventional nature of his sentiments, Bidlisi used the loneliness and anguish that he felt as creative inspiration for the first two works that he completed in Ottoman domains during his residence in and around Sofia. The two works – *Munazara-yi ruza va 'id* (*Comparison of Fasting and Feasting*) and a commentary on Ibn al-Farid's mystical ode to wine – dealt with mystical or pious topics in a literary manner and likely reflect his recommitment to a moral life.⁴⁴ These early works produced in Ottoman domains also underscore the importance of patronage in Bidlisi's efforts to establish a new life in a new land. Bidlisi presented both works to members of the Ottoman house and no doubt hoped that they would save him from his deplorable circumstances. The composition of the two works served multiple purposes. In the first instance, they were a means of introduction for Bidlisi to both Sultan Bayezid and his powerful son Ahmed. In addition to their use as a cultivator of protection and place in Ottoman lands, one of the works also served as a proposal for the undertaking of a much larger literary project.

Bidlisi's interest in attracting the attention of Prince Ahmed made considerable sense when he first arrived in Ottoman lands at the beginning of the sixteenth century. In addition to the patronage offered by the central court of the Ottoman sultan, the princely households of Bayezid's sons and some of his grandsons all represented important loci of patronage for litterateurs, poets, craftsmen, doctors, and astrologers.⁴⁵ The Ottoman dynastic system during this period facilitated the promotion

⁴³ Paul Losensky has rightfully criticized the tendency among modern researchers to confuse "the poet's historical life and his poetic personae" (Paul E. Losensky, *Welcoming Fighānī: Imitation and Poetic Individuality in the Safavid-Mughal Ghazal* [Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 1998], 89). Notwithstanding these reservations, we are on firmer ground in Bidlisi's case since his poetic lamentations are corroborated by the archival record.

⁴⁴ Bidlisi, *Sharḥ-i qaṣīda-yi khamrīya*.

⁴⁵ On the patronage of poets among the princely courts of Mehmed II and Bayezid II's reigns, see Halûk İpekten, *Divan edebiyatında edebî muhitler* (Istanbul: Milli Eğitim Basımevi, 1996), 162–91; Peirce, *Imperial Harem*, 46; on the importance of these princely courts for poetic patronage in the middle of the sixteenth century, see Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual in the Ottoman Empire: The Historian Mustafa Âli (1541–1600)*, 38–40.

of these activities at princely courts, as the sultan's sons, once having reached the age of maturity, were appointed governors in provincial cities where they were expected to learn the art of governance and establish their own households.⁴⁶ These provincial princely households assumed the structure of the central court, albeit on a smaller scale, and afforded Ottoman princes the opportunity to cultivate their interest in literature and the arts by supporting talented men. For instance, the salary registers of the princely household of the future sultan Süleyman include not only important advisers such as his personal tutor and various contingents of household troops, but also secretarial posts such as household chancellor (*tevki'i* or *nişancı*), chief financial officer (*defterdar*), and council secretaries (*katiban-i divan*).⁴⁷ Included among the secretaries of prince Süleyman's council was Sehi Beğ, a prominent poet of the first half of the sixteenth century and the author of an important biographical dictionary of poets.⁴⁸ In fact, many of the Ottoman princes during Bayezid's reign became important patrons of literature through their appointment of gifted poets as secretaries within their households. The late sixteenth-century historian Mustafa 'Âli records six prominent poets from Bayezid's reign, including Necati, who held positions ranging from council secretary to chancellor or chief financial officer at princely provincial courts.⁴⁹ Connections to an Ottoman prince who subsequently acceded the throne transformed the careers of many young scholars and litterateurs. For instance, a number of the most prominent figures in Bayezid's court, including Taci Beğ and Mü'eyyedzade 'Abdurrahman Efendi, first attracted the attention of the Ottoman sultan while Bayezid was still a prince governing in Amasya.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ On Ottoman princely households, see Haldun Eroğlu, *Osmanlı Devletinde Şehzadelik Kurumu* (Ankara: Akçağ Yayınları, 2004).

⁴⁷ TSMA D. 10052.

⁴⁸ Sehi Beğ is listed as a secretary of the divan with a daily salary of fifteen silver aspers (TSMA D. 10052).

⁴⁹ According to Mustafa 'Âli, in addition to Necati and Sehi Beğ, Tali'i, Sun'i, Zihni, and Zekayi all served as secretaries or scribal officers at the court of an Ottoman prince during Bayezid's reign (Muştafâ bin Aḥmed 'Âlî, *Künhü'l-abbâr'ın tezkiye kısmı*, ed. Mustafa İsen [Ankara: Atatürk Kültür Merkezi, 1994], 155–56, 158).

⁵⁰ In addition to these two men, Hasan Karataş has noted that access to patronage at Bayezid's princely court aided the sons of the Amasyan elite in their academic and legal careers (Hasan Karataş, "The City as a Historical Actor: The Urbanization and Ottomanization of the Halvetiye Sufi Order by the City of Amasya in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries" [Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2011], 82).

Bidlisi's desire to cultivate a relationship with Prince Ahmed likely reflected his understanding of these courtly dynamics. Moreover, at the turn of the sixteenth century, Prince Ahmed was perceived by many court observers to be the favored son of Bayezid. His appointment to Amasya, the former seat of his father's princely court, suggested that during this period Bayezid wished for Ahmed to succeed him.⁵¹ Consequently, Bidlisi dedicated his other work composed in Sofia to the favored prince. In the preface, he refers to Ahmed as the heir apparent (*vali-'ahd*) and in the context of a poetic ode to the prince expressed his wish that Ahmed succeed his father to the Ottoman throne.⁵² Bidlisi's use of the term heir apparent is a relative anomaly in the Ottoman context of this period. On the one hand, his use may be interpreted as encomiastic praise of a potential patron. Indeed, in his first years among the Ottomans, Bidlisi occasionally deployed the term in reference to two other sons of Bayezid, Selim and Şehinşah.⁵³ In this manner, Bidlisi's assertion of Ahmed's preferred status may be simply understood as appropriate praise. Yet, on the other hand, there is some indication that he offered Ahmed a special status as heir apparent in his writings. For instance, even as *The Eight Paradises* lauds all of Bayezid's sons as great princes, only Ahmed is praised in this context as the sultan's heir apparent.⁵⁴ While Bayezid may have favored Ahmed's succession, the formal appointment of an heir apparent had no precedent in Ottoman constitutional terms during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.⁵⁵ Like the traditions of the Aqquyunlu confederation, the Ottoman dynasty still invested sovereignty in the whole dynastic family, a tradition rooted in Turkic customs, through which any of the male members of the ruling family had an equal claim to succeed in leadership.⁵⁶ In the fifteenth century this tradition led to a number of

⁵¹ At the turn of the sixteenth century, there was a strong association between a governorship in Amasya and a prince's future accession to the throne. In fact, all four Ottoman sultans of the fifteenth century had served as governors in Amasya; Peirce, *The Imperial Harem*, 80.

⁵² Bidlîsî, *Sharh-i qaşîda-yi khamrîya*, 6b.

⁵³ In reference to Selim, see Bidlîsî, *Mir'ât al-'ushshâq*, Ms. Esad Efendi 1888, 155b; in reference to Şehinşah, see Bidlîsî, *Qânûn-i shâhanshâhî*, 5.

⁵⁴ Bidlîsî, *HB*, 593b.

⁵⁵ H. Erdem Çıpa, *The Making of Selim*, 29–31.

⁵⁶ Halil İnalçık, "Osmanlılar'da Saltanat Veraseti Usulü ve Türk Hâkimiyet Telâkkisiyle İlgisi," *Ankara Üniversitesi Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi Dergisi* 14, 1 (1959): 69–94; Anthony Dolphin Alderson, *The Structure of the Ottoman Dynasty* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956), 4–16; Peirce, *Imperial Harem*, 15–25, 79–86, 99–103; Joseph Fletcher, "Turco-Mongolian Monarchic Tradition in the Ottoman Empire," *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, 3–4, 1 (1979–80): 236–51.

civil wars among familial claimants to sovereignty.⁵⁷ Bayezid's support of Prince Ahmed was likely rooted in a desire to avoid future succession conflicts, a wish that was no doubt complicated by the large number of Bayezid's adult sons.⁵⁸ Bidlisi's prominent ascription of heir apparent to the favored prince certainly reflects this mood at the Ottoman court, but also likely expresses Bidlisi's own desire for orderly successions among rulers. After all, the violent civil wars that destroyed the Aqquyunlu regime in his native land all came about as the result of succession conflicts between competing branches of the Bayandurid clan. Bidlisi's use of the term likely reflected his own desires for peaceful and orderly succession as much as an attempt to cultivate a protective relationship with a powerful Ottoman prince.

Yet even as Bidlisi sought to make connections with Ahmed and the other powerful sons of Bayezid, he was probably more interested in securing the attention of the central Ottoman court. To that end, Bidlisi wrote *Comparison of Fasting and Feasting* and dedicated it to Sultan Bayezid.⁵⁹ Within the context of the work's preface, Bidlisi explains the unfortunate circumstances that led him to Ottoman domains and expresses the wish that his literary efforts would be well received by the sultan's servants. Significantly, Bidlisi also included another panegyric of Bayezid at the end of the work, which contains in its verses a proposal for a larger project that would sing the praises of the Ottoman house. The poem laments the fact that he had not yet been afforded an appropriate opportunity to celebrate the feats of Bayezid and his forebears:

I have set your lasting memory upon the pages of the heart
What a pity the writing remains in the night realm of visions!

From the black depth of my eye I would pen your description
I would set that treatise upon the white surfaces of the earth

⁵⁷ The most famous of these civil wars involved the sons of Bayezid I after his defeat to Timur at the Battle of Ankara in 1402. For a detailed analysis of this conflict, see Dimitris J. Kastritsis, *The Sons of Bayezid: Empire Building and Representation in the Ottoman Civil War of 1402–1413* (Leiden: Brill, 2007).

⁵⁸ For details on Bayezid's eight sons, see Uluçay, "Bayazid II.'in Ailesi."

⁵⁹ One manuscript copy of this work belonged personally to Bayezid as it bears his seal in two places; Bidlīsī, *Munzara-yi rūza va 'īd*, 1a, 25b. This work is also included in the inventory of Bayezid II's library compiled by 'Atufi in 1504, Budapest Magyar Tudományos Akademia Könyvtára Keleti Gyűjtemény, Török F59, 95a.

If in praise of your house I bring myself honor and purity
It will be self-praise and that is an inconceivable thought

How is my broken-legged pen going to enter the sea (meter) of your praise?
The leg of an ant cannot enter the expanse of an ocean⁶⁰

The poem also introduces a concept that would become one of the major hallmarks of Bidlisi's historical thought, as well as one of his most powerful tools for eliciting the support of patrons. Throughout his historical writings, Bidlisi suggests that the notion of a lasting memory (*zīkr-i jamīl*) is the clearest and most appropriate manner by which rulers may influence the world. Through good deeds (*maslahat*) and charitable works (*khayrat*), rulers develop reputations for justice and good governance. When these deeds and works are memorialized in prose and verse a ruler obtains a lasting memory that will long outlive the impermanent quality of his body and the fleeting nature of his own life.⁶¹ Incidentally, the concept also underscores the essential importance of gifted historians capable of establishing such a lasting memory in appropriately elevated prose and poetry. Understandably, Bidlisi hoped that historians who were successful in securing for their patrons a lasting memory would themselves be appropriately rewarded.

In this way, Bidlisi used the presentation of one work, namely *Comparison of Fasting and Feasting*, as the vehicle for securing the backing for a subsequent literary effort. This technique for soliciting patronage was not unique. In the latter years of Ya'qub's reign, Khunji-Isfahani proposed to laud the sultan's achievement in a future history in the context of the preface of a much shorter work on Sufism entitled *Badi' al-zaman* (*The Wonder of the Age*).⁶² The resulting history would become *Tarikh-i 'alam-ara-yi amini* (*The World-Adorning History of Sultan Ya'qub*), the most important source for the reign of Ya'qub. The similarities between Khunji-Isfahani and Bidlisi's strategies for securing patronage are striking. Like Bidlisi in Ottoman lands in 1502, when Khunji-Isfahani presented *The Wonder of the Age* to Ya'qub in 1487, he had only recently arrived at the Aqqyunlu court. For both Bidlisi and Khunji-Isfahani, the presentation of these shorter works, therefore, served not only as a means of introduction

⁶⁰ Bidlīsī, *Munāẓara-yi rūza va 'īd*, Ayasofya 3203, 25a.

⁶¹ There are many places in Bidlisi's work where he elaborates on the concept of a lasting memory, see, for example, Bidlīsī, *HB*, 375a. For further discussion of the concept, see Chapter 5.

⁶² Khūnjī-Isfahānī, *Tārīkh-i 'ālam-ārā-yi amīnī*, 72–73.

to the respective courts, but also as a clear proposal for future patronage through the composition of major histories. Evidently, Bayezid was impressed with Bidlisi's early work and accepted his proposal. Within a few months of having completed *Comparison of Fasting and Feasting*, Bidlisi embarked on his most ambitious literary project. The work of history commonly known as *The Eight Paradises* would secure an honored place for Bidlisi among the Ottomans, but it also planted seeds of jealousy and enmity, which would ultimately lead to another exile for the itinerant scholar.

While writing *The Eight Paradises*, Bidlisi benefited from the full support of the Ottoman court, as well as from the direct encouragement of several influential statesmen with close personal ties to Sultan Bayezid. These early supporters included high-ranking military leaders, such as Mustafa Pasha, Davud Pasha, and Hadım 'Ali Pasha, the long-serving vizier in the first decade of the sixteenth century. To all of these men, Bidlisi dedicated panegyric poems and reserved a special place in his history to recount the highlights of their careers.⁶³ Yet, two of the most important supporters of Bidlisi in his early years among the Ottomans were Mü'eyyedzade 'Abdurrahman Efendi and İskender Pasha. Although the particular careers of Mü'eyyedzade and İskender Pasha assumed different forms, their professional successes both largely accrued from the personal nature of their relationship with the sultan. As a consequence of this personal relationship, both men were awarded positions of power and prestige that became sources of patronage in their own right. Bidlisi likely discerned this aspect of their political influence and sought to cultivate his relationship with both of them.

Mü'eyyedzade 'Abdurrahman Efendi was a childhood friend of Sultan Bayezid, when the sultan was still a young prince governing in Amasya. He spent seven years of his young adulthood studying in Aleppo and Shiraz, where he passed considerable time under the instruction of Jalal al-Din Davani.⁶⁴ This period of study was significant, as his experiences in Shiraz enabled him subsequently to become the major conduit by which Persian scholars and scholarship passed to Ottoman lands. Upon Bayezid's accession, Mü'eyyedzade returned to Ottoman lands and during the period of

⁶³ Bidlisi lauded Mustafa Pasha and Davud Pasha through panegyric poetry (Ms. Esad Efendi 1888, 135b–37b) and in *The Eight Paradises* (HB, 604b, 606b); he included a special section in his chronicle on 'Ali Pasha, who, at the time of his writing, was the grand vizier (HB, 604b).

⁶⁴ For a detailed near-contemporary account of Müeyyedzade's life and career, see Taşkö-prizade, *al-Shaqā'iq al-nu'mānīyah fī 'ulamā' al-Dawlat al-'Uthmānīyah*, 290–95.

Bidlisi's drafting of *The Eight Paradises* attained the pinnacle of the Ottoman religious administrative hierarchy with his appointment as military judge of Rumelia in 1505–06.

During this period of rise, but especially after he had attained the military judgeship of Anatolia in 1501–02, Mü'eyyedzade became an important patron of poets and protector of scholars fleeing Iran. Mü'eyyedzade's interest in supporting poets stemmed from his own engagement with poetry; indeed, he was memorialized by most of the major sixteenth-century biographical dictionaries of poets for the quality of his verse in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish.⁶⁵ Such interest in poetry led to direct support of poets through gifts and financial rewards. At one point the young poet Zati declined a position at court after noting that the material support provided by Mü'eyyedzade and the chancellor Tacizade Ca'fer Çelebi were sufficient to meet his needs.⁶⁶ Similarly, when the poet Necati returned to Istanbul from Manisa after the death of his patron Prince Mahmud in 1507, Mü'eyyedzade encouraged the famous poet to gather his work in a *divan* (single collection of poetry).⁶⁷ Through these gatherings, and the support that he offered Zati and Necati, Mü'eyyedzade became an important patron of Turkish poetry during the final decade of Bayezid's rule. During these same years, he also emerged as an important intermediary for Persian scholars who fled their homeland and sought refuge at the Ottoman court. In fact, the military judge helped three of his friends, who were also former students of Davani, to obtain teaching positions and judgeships in Ottoman domains.⁶⁸ The settlement

⁶⁵ 'Âşık Çelebi praises his verse in the three languages (Âşık Çelebi, *Meşâ'irü'ş-Şu'arâ: İnceleme, Metin*, ed. Filiz Kılıç (Istanbul: İstanbul Araştırmaları Enstitüsü, 2010), 3:1496); entries on Mü'eyyedzade are also found in the other sixteenth-century Ottoman biographical dictionaries, including Sehî, *Tezkire-i Sehî*; Latîfî, *Tezkiretü'ş-şu'arâ ve tabırsatü'n-nuzamâ: inceleme, metin*, ed. Rıdvan Canım (Ankara: Atatürk Kültür Merkezi Başkanlığı, 2000), 383–84; and Hasan Çelebi Kınalızade, *Tezkiretü'ş-şuarâ* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1978), 1:318–25.

⁶⁶ İpekten, *Divan edebiyatında edebî muhitler*, 52–53; Âşık Çelebi, *Meşâ'irü'ş-Şu'arâ*, 3:1581–82.

⁶⁷ Necâtî Bey, *Necâtî Beg divanı*., ed. Ali Nihad Tarlan (İstanbul: Millî Eğitim Basımevi, 1963), 10; we can surmise that the *divan* was assembled after the death of Sultan Mahmud; see the elegy (*mersiye*) for the prince, *ibid.*, 110–14.

⁶⁸ With Müeyyedzade's help, Muzaffar al-Din Shirazi, Hafiz-i 'Ajam, and Muhyi al-Din 'Abd al-Avval (Saçlı Emir) all found teaching positions or judgeships in Ottoman lands. Mü'eyyedzade helped a fourth colleague, Hakim Shah Muhammad Qazvini, immigrate to Ottoman lands, but Qazvini did not teach or adjudicate in a formal capacity. Taşköprüzâde, *al-Shaqā'iq al-nu'mānīyah fī 'ulamā' al-dawlat al-'uthmānīyah*, 329–32, 330–31, 449–51, 488–89; Atçıl, *Scholars and Sultans*, 98.

of Persian scholars in Anatolia and the Balkans was often complicated by differences between the Hanafi legal tradition embraced by the Ottomans and the Shafi'i school, which prevailed among most of the inhabitants of western Iran. This difference affected the aid that Mü'eyyeddade could provide; only those of his friends who were Hanafi were appointed to judgeships.⁶⁹ For his Shafi'i friends, Mü'eyyeddade found appointments to teaching positions in Istanbul and the provinces.⁷⁰

As a consequence of Mü'eyyeddade's support of poets and Persian émigré scholars, Bidlisi actively cultivated a relationship with this prominent Ottoman and friend of the sultan. In fact, in the earliest version of *The Eight Paradises* to appear in 1506, Bidlisi acknowledged the judge's direct involvement with his historiographical project through the various suggestions that he offered.⁷¹ 'Âşik Çelebi makes clear that the two enjoyed a close relationship; he notes in his entry for Mü'eyyeddade that Bidlisi would gather with other Persian émigrés for social and scholarly conversation.⁷² More importantly, one of Bidlisi's sons, Ebu'l-Fazl Mehmed, began to study with Mü'eyyeddade some time after his arrival in Ottoman lands.⁷³ In recognition of his relationship with the military judge, Bidlisi sought to return the favor through praise of the great man. While Bidlisi mentioned many of Bayezid's statesmen in *The Eight Paradises*, he lavished special attention on Mü'eyyeddade in both prose and verse.⁷⁴

İskender Pasha was another statesman whose special support Bidlisi solicited in his first years in Ottoman domains. İskender, and other military commanders like him, represented a distinctly different tradition of Ottoman leadership from men such as Mü'eyyeddade. In contrast to the members of the Ottoman scholarly administrative class who often hailed from Rumelian or Anatolian Muslim families, many, but by no means all, of the important military leaders from this period were born to prominent

⁶⁹ Muhyi al-Din 'Abd al-Avval was the son of the Hanafi judge of Tabriz. He was the only Persian émigré scholar from this period to attain a high judicial position in the Ottoman administration (Atçıl, "The Formation of the Ottoman Learned Class and Legal Scholarship, 1300–1600," 113).

⁷⁰ On the career of Muzaffar al-Din Shirazi, see Taşköprüzade, *al-Shaqā'iq al-nu'māniyah fī 'ulamā' al-Dawlat al-Uthmāniyah*, 329–30; on Hafiz 'Ajām, see *ibid.*, 449–51.

⁷¹ Bidlisi, *Hasht bihsht*, Ms. Esad Efendi 2198, 369b; Genç, "Acem'den Rum'a," 175.

⁷² 'Âşik Çelebi, *Meşâ'irü's-Şu'arâ*, 1498.

⁷³ Nevizade Atayi, *Şakaik-i nu'maniyye ve zeyilleri*, ed. Abdülkadir Özcan, vol. 2 (Hadā'iq al-Shaqā'iq fī takmilat al-Shaqā'iq), Çağrı Yayınları (Istanbul: Çağrı Yayınları, 1989), 188.

⁷⁴ See, for example, Bidlisi, *HB*, 613a.

Christian Balkan families.⁷⁵ İskender was born into a Christian family; his mother was Genoese and his father was a Greek from Trabzon.⁷⁶ By the middle of Sultan Mehmed II's reign, İskender had attained an important military post as the provincial commander (*sancak beği*) of Eğribos and, a few years later, in 1477, he was elevated to the position of *sancak beği* of Bosnia.⁷⁷ Over the following decades, İskender had an outstanding military career and climbed in the ranks to a vizierate, during which he saved Bayezid II's life from a messianic dervish assailant in 1492.⁷⁸ By the time of Bidlisi's arrival in Ottoman lands, the aging pasha had come out of retirement to assume once again the strategically crucial governorship of Bosnia. During this final posting, which extended until the end of his life in 1506–07 and coincided with Bidlisi's residence in Ottoman lands, İskender Pasha and his son Mustafa led a number of daring expeditions in Venetian territory which further enhanced his reputation as a fierce warrior who strove for the expansion of the domains of faith.⁷⁹

In view of İskender's outsized standing in relation to Bayezid, Bidlisi likely viewed the military hero as an important potential ally. Indeed, Bidlisi corresponded with İskender during his first years in Ottoman lands. In one letter to İskender, Bidlisi describes his intention to celebrate the deeds of the great soldier in the context of his yet-to-be written history of the Ottoman dynasty. Bidlisi clarifies his desire to be counted among the great man's allies and well-wishers: "I found an appropriate time to present a petition presumptuously before the lantern of shining conscience and the lamp niche of consideration of your eminence, the refuge of the domains and everlasting angels, the Alexander (İskender) of the Age in Islam, protector of the scholars and impoverished through beneficence."⁸⁰ In return for such support as İskender could offer, Bidlisi proposed to memorialize the great man in prose and poetry in order that "the mention of the good works, sincere requests for intercession, and constant well-wishing on behalf of your eminence in my book of history in the

⁷⁵ Muhammet Zahit Atçıl, "State and Government in the Mid-Sixteenth Century Ottoman Vizierates of Rüstem Pasha (1544–61)" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 2015), 204–13.

⁷⁶ Hedda Reindl, *Männer um Bayezid: eine prosopographische Studie über die Epoche Sultan Bayezids II. (1481–1512)* (Berlin: K. Schwarz, 1983), 240.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 241.

⁷⁸ Bidlīsī, *HB*, 549b; Kemalpaşazade, *Tevarih*, VIII, 128; Oruç Beğ, *Tarih*, 152.

⁷⁹ Reindl, *Männer um Bayezid*, 253–59. Bidlisi highlights these expeditions in *The Eight Paradises*, Bidlīsī, *HB*, 557b–61b.

⁸⁰ Bidlīsī, *Munsha'āt*, Ms. Esad Efendi 1888, 141a.

above-mentioned particulars becomes well known and widespread among the people of faith and good fortune.”⁸¹ Although Bidlisi indicates that he became aware of İskender’s deeds only through the reports of intermediaries, he promised to offer İskender everlasting renown through rhetorical exertions in praise of the celebrated soldier:

For years this despicable one will be honored in that appropriate and fitting service. Moreover armies of your eminence’s supplicants will be multiplied throughout the world by perusing this book of deeds and glancing upon your laudable actions and honorable exploits.⁸²

Bidlisi’s proposal to İskender is significant in two respects. First, it indicates a clear understanding on Bidlisi’s part of the importance of securing well-placed allies at the Ottoman court in the first years of his residence. The favor of the sultan in commissioning *The Eight Paradises* was crucial, yet the support of the sultan’s men was equally necessary to attain an honored place. Second, Bidlisi offers these potential patrons, in exchange for support, the only gift that he could proffer: the historian’s ability to secure for individuals a lasting memory in this world, a theme explored in greater detail in Chapter 5. In this sense, Bidlisi used *The Eight Paradises* not only as an opportunity to laud the deeds of the Ottoman sultans, but also as a vehicle to memorialize in perpetuity key members of the ruling elite who were in a position to aid him.

Bidlisi’s intentions are reflected in *The Eight Paradises*, in which İskender Pasha emerges as one of the key heroes in the reign of Bayezid.⁸³ His overtures of goodwill toward the prominent soldier are also apparent in his inclusion of İskender’s son in the work.⁸⁴ The inclusion of Mustafa and, for that matter, any of the Ottoman soldiers or statesmen who were mentioned in *The Eight Paradises*, was Bidlisi’s way of repaying a debt to those whom he judged had helped him in his first years among the Ottomans. In a presentation copy of the work completed in the first year of Selim’s reign, Bidlisi described in a marginal note his rationale for the inclusion of certain men in his history of Bayezid II:

So, the number of lords, governors, and commanders of the Ghazi sultan is greater than the description warranted them and the excellence of their qualities is beyond the capacity of clear expression. Consequently, in accordance with the Arabic

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Bidlisi, *HB*, 603b.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 560b–61b.

adage: thank those who show kindness to you and show kindness to those who thank you, it is necessary to praise the good name of that special group of good-fortuned notables who exhibited acts of kindness towards me and kept good company with me. And on account of the permanence of mentioning their goodness upon the pages of historical accounts, I would distinguish their lasting memory through their mention and proffer prayers on behalf of all the notable men of state and faith.⁸⁵

Within a few years of his arrival in Ottoman lands, Bidlisi had established the right relationships with Bayezid's household and key members of the court to secure for himself a worthy position within his new environs. Bidlisi's literary production and solicitation of patronage constituted the principal mechanism by which he initiated and cultivated these relationships. Through the composition of minor works, such as *Comparison of Fasting and Feasting* and his commentary on Ibn al-Farid's wine ode, Bidlisi not only made important connections with the Ottoman sultan and his most powerful son, but he also secured the sultan's support for a major literary project: the composition of a dynastic history of the Ottoman house in Persian. While the production of such a work entailed continuing material support from the dynasty, it also created opportunities for Bidlisi to cultivate patronage relationships with other leading men of Bayezid's court. Clearly, he was fully conscious of this potential benefit, and so, as can be seen through his personal correspondence with İskender Pasha, he sought to exploit the inclusion of these men in his history to his own advantage.

PRODUCTION AND RECEPTION OF *THE EIGHT PARADISES*

In the first years of his residence among the Ottomans, Bidlisi made considerable progress in securing an honorable and worthy status at the court of Bayezid II. Not only had he successfully established profitable relations with the sultan and his high statesmen, but he also had been encouraged to write a major history of the Ottoman dynasty. This commission offered Bidlisi a chance to display the full range of his stylistic abilities through the composition of a major work of prose and poetry. For the next thirty months – between mid-1503 and early 1506 – Bidlisi devoted his energies to producing a massive chronicle of the lives and

⁸⁵ Ibid., 622a.

deeds of the Ottoman sultans from the establishment of the dynasty at the end of the thirteenth century up to his own day. While working on the project, Bidlisi benefited from the largesse of the sultan, yet he was also clearly aware of the greater rewards – gifts and prestigious appointments – that his work had the potential to garner. In this sense, the reception of literary efforts was of equal, or even greater, importance than the patron's initial encouragement.

Yet beyond its role in securing an honorable social status, the interaction of patronage and literary production also affected the development of an emerging Ottoman ideological framework during this period. *The Eight Paradises*, as well as a number of the other treatises that Bidlisi wrote between 1502 and 1511, present political concepts that were relatively new to Ottoman readers when they were presented in the first decade of the sixteenth century. Yet, Bidlisi's writing represented but one of several voices, many of which articulated important aspects of a nascent Ottoman ideology of rule. Accordingly, the broader patronage environment of Bayezid's court suggests that the complex interaction between literary works produced by these differing voices and the reception of these works – whether positive or lukewarm – at court helped inform the gradual emergence of a coherent Ottoman ideological program over time. In this environment, patrons were hardly the wholly active directors of ideological discourse that we frequently assume them to be. Rather, the environment of patronage of this period suggests that the complex interplay between literary production and the broader reception of lettered patronage among other intellectuals played a much more fundamental role in the production of coherent ideological discourses.

On personal and professional levels, this patronage environment constituted a mixed blessing for Bidlisi in the final years of Bayezid's reign. *The Eight Paradises* was well received by Bayezid and certain litterateurs affiliated with the court. The work garnered for him a significant monetary reward and a secure place within the court. Moreover, in the months and years after its initial circulation, *The Eight Paradises* was emulated by a number of writers who sought to make their own mark on the nascent Ottoman historiographical tradition. By the end of the sixteenth century, the work became a mainstay of Ottoman historical writing through its use and citation by the most prominent Ottoman historians of the period. However, more immediately, Bidlisi felt that his work did not garner the rewards and appointments commensurate with its contribution to the Ottoman dynasty. He lay the blame for this failure squarely on the shoulders of two high statesmen – Bidlisi's early ally Mü'eyyadzade and

the grand vizier 'Ali Pasha – whose jealousy of his talents prompted them to deny Bidlisi a worthy place among the Ottomans.

The nature of the precise relationship between patronage, literary production, and a legitimating ideology in the Ottoman context of this period is not at all clear. While there is little doubt that Bayezid and the court patronized many important historical and political works, the direct influence patrons exerted on authors was constrained by the writing process, as well as the multiplicity of authors, and consequently viewpoints, which the court patronized. Bidlisi worked intensely on his history for thirty months and in that time produced a draft of the work in eight books. Before its initial presentation, it is far from clear that Bayezid took any specific interest in Bidlisi's progress. So, while Bayezid did commission Bidlisi in 1502 "to write a work in elevated style, appointed with the marks of refinement, and pleasing to elites and common folk," which would extol the good deeds and worthy attributes of the Ottoman house, the sultan likely exerted little influence on the specific historical content or particular ideological positions to be articulated in the work.⁸⁶ In this sense, Bidlisi's work should be considered a product of official patronage of the Ottoman court, but not necessarily a reflection of an official Ottoman historiographical outlook or legitimating ideology. Indeed, the plurality of commissioned histories in the latter years of Bayezid's reign would seem to negate the possibility that the Ottoman court in the reign of Bayezid espoused an officially sanctioned conception of itself.⁸⁷ Authors certainly aimed to please their patrons, but the precise positions that would be accepted and rewarded by the court were not clearly delineated. Consequently, Bidlisi's experiences and those of his contemporaries suggest that the complex interplay between production and reception helped forge and refine a coherent ideological framework over time.

Although Bidlisi asserted that he finished the work in only two and one-half years, the complete writing process in fact extended over a ten-year period.⁸⁸ Based upon the relatively large number of autographed and contemporaneous extant manuscripts, it is clear that this ten-year writing

⁸⁶ Bidlîsî, *HB*, 8a.

⁸⁷ In fact, at the same time Bidlisi was active in writing *The Eight Paradises*, Bayezid encouraged the production of another major history of the Ottoman house through the commissioning of Kemalpaşazade (Kemalpaşazade, *Tevârih-i âl-i Osman VII. defter*).

⁸⁸ In the introduction to *The Eight Paradises*, Bidlisi notes that he completed the work in two and one-half years, beginning in 1502, although he did not finish the conclusion to the work until after the accession of Selim in 1512 (*HB*, 8b).

period consisted of at least two distinct phases in which Bidlisi composed, revised, and expanded the work.⁸⁹ In the first phase of writing, Bidlisi worked intensely to produce eight books, which included the prefaces and introductions for all eight sultans, as well as all of the narrative portions of the work. This phase of production culminated in his recitation of a portion of his history to Bayezid during the celebrations of *'id al-adha* at the Ottoman court in 1505.⁹⁰ It is on the basis of work produced during this period that Bidlisi later proudly proclaimed that he accomplished in a mere thirty-month period, a work that would normally consume thirty years.⁹¹ In the second phase of composition, Bidlisi revised the two introductions he had previously completed for the reigns of Mehmed II and Bayezid II and added an introduction and verse conclusion.⁹² This final stage of writing culminated in 1513 with the presentation of the revised and expanded history to the new sultan Selim.

Although Bidlisi revised and expanded his history, the first version of the work made an immediate impact on the Ottoman cultural landscape when it circulated in 1506. In a short period of time, Bidlisi had gathered a wide variety of reports on Ottoman history from both Turkish and Persian historical sources and consulted numerous living authorities to produce a detailed history in Persian that seemed to set a new standard in Ottoman historical writing. The achievement was certainly recognized by the Ottoman court, which awarded Bidlisi 50,000 silver aspers for the completion of *The Eight Paradises*.⁹³ The monetary reward for his work was significant; the only other individuals recorded in the gift register of Bayezid's reign who received such large sums were members of the royal family and top ministers and commanders.⁹⁴ The register includes a number of gifts for the presentation of books to the sultan, but such rewards generally fell

⁸⁹ For a discussion of the extant manuscript copies of *The Eight Paradises*, see Markiewicz, "The Crisis of Rule," 399–408.

⁹⁰ *İnamat Defteri*, 185.

⁹¹ Bidlisi, *HB*, 632b.

⁹² These changes constitute some of the most substantial differences between the two draft versions of the work (Ms. Esad Efendi 2199/2198 and Ms. Esad Efendi 2197). For further details, see Markiewicz, "The Crisis of Rule," 399–408.

⁹³ *İnamat Defteri*, Muallim Cevdet O.71, 185.

⁹⁴ Bayezid's married daughters regularly received gifts of 50,000 silver aspers when they came to visit the court; see, for example, the gift of 50,000 silver aspers given to the wife of Yahya Pasha (*İnamat Defteri*, Muallim Cevdet O.71, p. 59). On several occasions, the viziers were awarded gifts of 100,000 silver aspers; see, for example, the gifts distributed on 29 Jumada I 915/September 14, 1509, *ibid.*, 343.

between 7,000 and 15,000 silver aspers.⁹⁵ In fact, Bidlisi's reward for completing *The Eight Paradises* was the highest monetary gift bestowed on any individual for the presentation of a literary work in the nearly ten-year period recorded by the gift register.⁹⁶

Bidlisi's peers immediately acknowledged the importance of his work both through imitation and overt praise. For instance, in the year Bidlisi completed *The Eight Paradises*, a fellow Persian émigré, Basiri, composed a short poem with a chronogram to commemorate the achievement.⁹⁷ While the chronogram suggests that *The Eight Paradises* circulated within court circles as early as 1506, in the following years, it also started to influence the production of Ottoman historical writing. Within ten years of its initial circulation, the Rumelian military judge would encourage another Persian poet, Ada'i Shirazi, to write a history of Selim's reign by pointing to the example of *The Eight Paradises*.⁹⁸ Ada'i's history, entitled *Shahnama-yi Salim Khan (History of Selim)*, became an influential work in its own right, as it helped to initiate the *Selimname* genre within Ottoman belles lettres. While Bidlisi's work clearly made the most impact among other Persian émigrés with poetic inclinations, the work also influenced subsequent historical writing in Turkish. Even before Ada'i acknowledged the importance of *The Eight Paradises* in his own work, another contemporary poet known as Bihishti took Bidlisi's work as a model and began writing a prose history of the Ottoman house in Turkish.⁹⁹ Bihishti clearly used *The Eight Paradises* as stylistic inspiration, as well as a source for many of the historical accounts that he included in his own work.¹⁰⁰ Such

⁹⁵ Erünsal, "Türk Edebiyatı Tarihinin Arşiv Kaynakları I: II. Bâyezid devrine ait bir in'âmât defteri."

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ The chronogram, *Kitab-i fath* (book of conquest), refers both to the subject of Bidlisi's *The Eight Paradises*, as well as to its date of completion in 911 AH (*Dīvân-i Bâsîrî*, SK Ms. Aşir Efendi 292, 280a); Kutlukhan Eren, "Basîrî ve Dîvânının Tenkidli Metni (Mehmed b. Ahmed b. Ebû'l-Me'âlî el-Murtaẓâ)" (M. A., İstanbul Üniversitesi, 1999).

⁹⁸ Due to the difficulty of precisely dating Ada'i's work, it is difficult to know which judge he refers to here (Mavlânâ Muhammed Adâ'î Şîrâzî, *Adâ'î-yi Şîrâzî ve Selim-nâmesi: inceleme-metin-çeviri*, ed. Abdüsselam Bilgen [Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2007], 22).

⁹⁹ On the basis of evidence contained in another of Bihishti's works, Fatma Kaytaz has concluded that Bihishti started his chronicle after 1507 and completed it sometime before his death in 1512 (Fatma Kaytaz, "Behişti Tarihi [797-907/1389-1502] [Giriş, Metin, Dizin]" [Ph.D. diss., Marmara Üniversitesi, 2011], xviii).

¹⁰⁰ Both Brigitte Moser and Fatma Kaytaz have noted Bihishti's reliance on Bidlisi's history as a major source for his own chronicle (Ahmet Sinan Çelebi Behişti, *Die Chronik des Ahmed Sinân Çelebi genannt Bihişti: eine Quelle zur Geschichte des osmanischen Reiches unter Sultan Bâyezid II.*, ed. Brigitte Moser (Munich: R. Trofenik, 1980), 32-34); Kaytaz, "Behişti Tarihi," xlv; Kaytaz, in particular, has noted the degree to which Bihishti drew

reliance on Bidlisi's work was particularly apparent in those sections of Bihishti's history that provided details regarding Ottoman interactions with Persian rulers.¹⁰¹ Bidlisi's integration of the nascent Ottoman historical tradition and Timurid-Turkmen historiography demonstrated the suitability of reconciling and harmonizing Ottoman history with other historical narratives and marked a significant development in Ottoman historical writing.

Beyond the impact of *The Eight Paradises* on Bihishti's work, Bidlisi's chronicle also influenced the literary expectations of subsequent histories written in Turkish. Whereas most previous historians writing in Turkish wrote in a simple style that reflected the vernacular, Bidlisi's work, in its rejection of such an approach as unworthy of the subject, called for a new type of Ottoman history that reflected the tastes and expectations of a sophisticated court culture immersed in the Perso-Arabic literary tradition, a point explored further in Chapter 5. While Bidlisi chose to write this history in Persian, the language of his professional training, *The Eight Paradises*, in some measure, awakened certain segments of the Ottoman court to the possibility of producing histories in an elevated Turkish prose style. Bidlisi's ornate Persian, while lauded as a prominent marker of the sophisticated cultural capacity of the Ottoman court, seemed excessive to some of his Ottoman readers. Even major Ottoman literary figures of the late sixteenth century, who were themselves fully committed to a hyperliterate use of Persian, expressed reservations about Bidlisi's prose. For instance, while the historian and litterateur Mustafa 'Âli applauded Bidlisi as an unparalleled historian of exceptional rhetorical ability, he acknowledged that Bidlisi's use of ambiguity, metaphor, and literary devices were excessive.¹⁰² Significantly, Bidlisi's work demonstrated the need for an equally refined and expressive treatment of Ottoman history in Turkish. Mü'eyyetzade recognized the limitations of Bidlisi's work, as well as the potential for Ottoman history in refined Turkish. Before Bidlisi had completed *The Eight Paradises*, the military judge approached Sultan Bayezid with a proposal for a new history in Turkish and recommended one of his students, Kemalpaşazade, for

on the lines of Arabic and Persian poetry originally found in *The Eight Paradises* for inclusion in his own work in Turkish, *ibid.*, xlvii, xlviii–xlix, li.

¹⁰¹ Kaytaş, "Behiştî Tarihi," liv.

¹⁰² Mustafa bin Ahmet Âli, *Muṣṭafā 'Âlî's Künhü'l-Aḥbār and Its Preface According to the Leiden Manuscript*, ed. Jan Schmidt (Istanbul: Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut te İstanbul, 1987), 35–36.

the undertaking.¹⁰³ Bayezid agreed and commissioned Kemalpaşazade to write a history of the Ottoman house.¹⁰⁴ This new history of the Ottoman house in Turkish was well received by the court; indeed, it elicited the sizable sum of 30,000 silver aspers upon its initial presentation in November 1510.¹⁰⁵ Even so, the popularity of Kemalpaşazade's history – as measured by the number of extant manuscripts – paled in comparison with Bidlisi's sixteenth-century readership.¹⁰⁶ Although it would not become as popular as *The Eight Paradises*, the importance of Kemalpaşazade's history was recognized in some quarters as a transformative work within the Ottoman Turkish historiographic tradition. In contrast with his mixed remarks on Bidlisi's work, the late sixteenth-century historian, Mustafa 'Âli applauded Kemalpaşazade's ability "to express himself in the clear style of the day."¹⁰⁷

While in several places Bidlisi recollected the general popularity and significance of his history, such popularity was likely confined to poetic and literary circles, which were more predisposed to embrace the hyperliterate flare of Bidlisi's writing. Clearly, positive appraisal of the work was not universal within Ottoman court circles. In fact, some of the most influential elements of the court leveled pointed criticisms at *The Eight Paradises*, which Bidlisi interpreted as rooted in the jealousy of certain leading statesmen. The main criticisms – examined in greater detail in Chapter 5 – revolved around interrelated issues of narrative, scope, style, and language, yet, in Bidlisi's subsequent estimation, had a chilling effect on his ability to secure a worthy reward for his literary efforts.

BIDLISI'S POSITION AT THE OTTOMAN COURT

In later years, Bidlisi would reflect upon Mü'eyyedzade's reaction and conclude that the Ottoman statesman misjudged the value of his history and consequently punished him unjustly. He remembered these years as a period of marginalization at the court during which time Mü'eyyedzade and the grand vizier 'Ali Pasha "offered a few things to appease me as one

¹⁰³ 'Aşık Çelebi implies that Bidlisi had not yet finished *The Eight Paradises* when Mü'eyyedzade proposed to Bayezid that Kemalpaşazade write a history in Turkish, 'Aşık Çelebi, *Meşâ'irü 'ş-Şu'arâ*, 297.

¹⁰⁴ For Kemalpaşazade's account of this commission, see Kemalpaşazade, *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osmân*, I. Defter, ed. Şerafettin Turan (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1970), 35–37.

¹⁰⁵ *İnamat Defteri*, Muallim Cevdet O.71, p. 405.

¹⁰⁶ On the manuscripts of *The Eight Paradises*, see Markiewicz, "Crisis of Rule," 399–415.

¹⁰⁷ Âli, *Muştafâ 'Âlî's Künhü'l-Ahbar and Its Preface According to the Leiden Manuscript*, 36.

gives walnuts and raisins to a child,” but largely shunned him.¹⁰⁸ While the various complaints that Bidlisi lodged in both personal communications to the sultan as well as in verse indicate that he certainly felt slighted by their reaction, the record of his treatment at the Ottoman court presents a rather more nuanced picture.¹⁰⁹ During his nearly ten-year residence at Bayezid’s court, Bidlisi received a variety of monetary rewards and distinctions of rank commensurate with his status as a distinguished scholar and statesman. The discrepancy between the actual value and relative rank of these honors and Bidlisi’s comparison of them to little sweets given to a child, ultimately underscores the high esteem in which he held his own abilities and suggests that he desired a top position within the Ottoman administration.

Although the Ottoman administrative hierarchy and traditions of patronage exhibited important differences from the Aqqyunlu court with which Bidlisi was most familiar, the general mechanisms through which the administration operated were similar in significant ways. As with the Aqqyunlu court, the Ottoman court largely secured the loyalty and allegiance of crucial social segments during this period through the acknowledgement of certain privileges and appointments. The boundaries of these key segments were synonymous with the military and scholarly religious classes that administered the polity and provided an ideological rationale for rule. Patronage, as expressed through official appointments and periodic gifts, was widespread; in addition to the approximately 1,000 individuals directly tied to the court at this time, the Ottoman dynasty supported the livelihoods of many thousands more through positions that ranged from minor provincial military appointments to caretakers of mosques in nearly every major town.

Bidlisi’s position at the Ottoman court during this period can be assessed through the monetary compensation that he received, as well as through the rank and honors that he was afforded. As with all other men attached to the court, his compensation derived largely from two sources: the fixed stipend associated with usufruct grants and the gifts that he received for his literary production or on other ceremonial occasions. As a courtier without an official post, Bidlisi’s rank largely corresponded with his general professional attributes. On the one hand he was a distinguished

¹⁰⁸ Başaran, 190. Bidlīsī, *HB*, 633b.

¹⁰⁹ Bidlisi complains of the poor treatment he received in the conclusion to *The Eight Paradises*, as well as in a personal letter to the sultan, which he wrote after having departed Ottoman lands on pilgrimage in 1511, TSMA E. 5675.

member of the scholarly class (*mawlana*), while on the other, he was gifted master of prose and verse (*munshi*) who could be employed for the composition of official correspondence.

Throughout his residence in Ottoman domains, Bidlisi likely benefited from the regular fixed income derived from the tax revenues of a land grant (*timar*). Generally, such grants were offered to men of the military class in exchange for military service and the provisioning of an agreed-upon number of mounted armed men whose number grew in proportion with the value of the grant.¹¹⁰ These land grants represented the basic compensation by which the Ottoman court distributed rewards to the men upon whom it relied in all of its military campaigns. As with a small number of poets and scholars attached to the court, Bidlisi's land grants most likely did not entail military service on campaign. For learned men, the service expected in exchange for land grants often consisted of literary production or their attendance at court. Indeed, 'Âşık Çelebi notes that Bidlisi benefited from a mid-sized land grant (*ze'amet*) outside of Sofia while he wrote his history.¹¹¹ Similarly, during the reign of Süleyman, a poet such as Hayali accumulated significant wealth from land grants offered to him for his verse.¹¹² The precise terms of Bidlisi's service are unknown, but Bidlisi likely grew to consider his land grants his own property. In a letter addressed to Bayezid shortly after his departure on pilgrimage, he referenced his land grants and objected to their confiscation, without which he had no means to support his family and members of his household whom he had left behind.¹¹³ From the court's perspective, his departure signaled an end to his service and warranted the redistribution of the land grants to other worthy servants.

The other form of monetary compensation that the court offered Bidlisi assumed the form of gifts. Bidlisi received gifts for one of two principal reasons. The first type of gift was offered in exchange for Bidlisi's presentation of a literary work. *The Eight Paradises* precipitated his largest gift from the court, but throughout the last decade of Bayezid's

¹¹⁰ On *timars* and their administration, see Halil İnalcık, *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age 1300–1600* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1973), 104–18; Halil İnalcık, "Timar," *DİA*; Nicoara Beldiceanu, *Le Timar dans l'État ottoman* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrasowitz, 1980); Metin Kunt, *The Sultan's Servants: the Transformation of Ottoman Provincial Government, 1550–1650* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), XX

¹¹¹ 'Âşık Çelebi, *Meşâ'irü 'ş-şu'arâ*, 297.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 1544.

¹¹³ TSMA E. 5675.

rule, Bidlisi completed a number of other works for which he received rewards valued between 7,000 and 14,000 silver aspers.¹¹⁴ The other type of gift was given to Bidlisi by virtue of his general status at the court. Such gifts were often distributed to members of the palace on special occasions such as during Ramadan. For these occasions Bidlisi generally received 7,000 silver aspers, although the amount varied between 5,000 and 10,000.¹¹⁵ Between these gifts and his stipend from land grants, Bidlisi could rely on a sizable income with which he could establish his own household.

Beyond these stipends and gifts, Bidlisi was also distinguished in the Ottoman court through recognition of his rank and status. As a member of the scholarly community of Istanbul, the court honored him on those occasions in which religious scholars received gifts.¹¹⁶ Similarly, perhaps as a sign of his declining standing at court in the final years of Bayezid's reign, the register records Bidlisi as the instructor in the school of the mosque of 'Ali Pasha, the salary of which amounted to the relatively modest sum of fifty silver aspers per diem.¹¹⁷ Similarly, in his capacity as a gifted formulator of official correspondence, Bidlisi was also occasionally honored along with the other members of the central secretarial corps.¹¹⁸

Bidlisi's most important designation was as a member of the *müteferrika* (distinguished individuals attached to the court). The *müteferrika* during the reign of Sultan Bayezid connoted a miscellaneous assortment of individuals marked by their common distinction as high-ranking men and women worthy of an honored place at court.¹¹⁹ Consequently, the group members hailed from diverse backgrounds: the sons of Christian vassals held hostage by the court, Turkmen dynasts who had been offered refuge, and the wives and children of high-ranking officials, and officers.¹²⁰ The distinction frequently carried with it a monthly stipend from the Central Treasury (*hızane-i 'amire*), but more importantly it signaled

¹¹⁴ *İnamat Defteri*, Muallım Cevdet O.71, pp. 304, 321, 419.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 229, 304, 343.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 343.

¹¹⁷ For at least some period around 1510, Bidlisi was formally employed as an instructor (*müderres*) in a school of the mosque ('Ali Pasha, *İnamat Defteri* Muallım Cevdet O.71, p. 417).

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 298.

¹¹⁹ Erhan Afyoncu, "Müteferrika," *DİA*.

¹²⁰ For a list of the *müteferrika* attached to the old palace in Istanbul in the late reign of Bayezid II, see TSMA D. 9629, p. 6.

membership among the core elements of the sultanic court.¹²¹ While Bidlisi does not refer to his inclusion in the group in his own writings, his placement in the gift register indicates his membership among the select group at least during some period of Bayezid's reign. One entry, in particular, not only substantiates this point, but also provides some indication of Bidlisi's relative status within the court. On February 9, 1505, Sultan Bayezid assembled all the members of the central administration and servants of the palace for a ceremony commemorating the death of his son Mehmed. While the register is replete with condolence gifts to individuals who had lost family members – indeed Bidlisi received two such gifts for the loss of his father and the loss of a son – the passing of the sultan's son marked an occasion for collective mourning, which necessitated the distribution of a gift to all the members of the court.¹²² In accordance with Ottoman tradition, the order of gift presentation, as well as the specific value of the gift corresponded with the relative rank of the recipients.¹²³ In this way, the ceremony started with those viziers who were present before proceeding to the other high statesmen, officers of the household regiments, and other state and palace functionaries. Bidlisi's name and presumable rank appears among the *müteferrika*, yet the particular gift he received corresponded to the gifts of some of the highest-ranking statesmen, namely the two chief military judges and the chancellor.¹²⁴ Bidlisi's exceptional status likely reflected the privileged place that he enjoyed as he wrote *The Eight Paradises* in 1505. Yet, the discrepancy between his official status as *müteferrika* and his informal recognition as one of the most distinguished members of the court highlights the challenges Bidlisi faced in securing a worthy place among the Ottomans. On the one hand, his experience and ability marked him as one of the most valued servants of the sultan, yet his status as a newcomer without experience and connections within the Ottoman administrative

¹²¹ The *müteferrika* were part of the larger group within the court that was entitled to a monthly stipend (*müşahere-yi horan*), see, for example, the inclusion of *müteferrika* in a register of these stipend-holders, TSMA D. 9587, p. 4

¹²² For the entry on the death of his father, see *İnamat Defteri* Muallim Cevdet O.71, p. 33; for the death of an unnamed son, see *ibid.*, 337.

¹²³ All of the entries in the register follow the protocol established by Ottoman tradition as elaborated in the *Kanunname* of Sultan Mehmed II.

¹²⁴ Those who immediately precede and follow Bidlisi are clearly members of the *müteferrika*, including, among others, sons of the Wallachian voivode and the son of the sultan's tutor. While most of these men received more modest gifts, Bidlisi was awarded the same gift as the military judges and chancellor, namely a cloak of red velvet produced in Italy, *İnamat Defteri* Muallim Cevdet O.71, p. 97.

system seemed to hold him back. The discrepancy is significant, as it would constitute the source of Bidlisi's greatest frustration in the last years of Bayezid's reign. Indeed, as the subsequent record of the register indicates, by the end of the decade, Bidlisi had lost direct access to the royal court and instead plied his scholarly trade as a mid-level instructor in one of the schools of Istanbul.¹²⁵

ALTERED TERRAIN, SHIFTING ALLIANCES

This period of frustration for Bidlisi coincided with major political developments within Ottoman domains, which would ultimately affect succession to Bayezid. In some measure, Bidlisi was aware of these developments and sought to adjust his allegiances in accordance with the shifting political terrain. Certainly, he capitalized upon the waning fortunes of two statesmen whom he would come to identify as his antagonists and use the opportunity afforded by their demise to escape Ottoman lands. These two statesmen were Bayezid's grand vizier, 'Ali Pasha, and chief military judge, Mü'eyyedzade. Despite all the indications of a close supportive relationship, Bidlisi gradually came to suspect that Mü'eyyedzade harbored a strong jealousy toward him and, along with 'Ali Pasha, conspired to exclude him from high office and prevent his departure for pilgrimage.

More broadly, in the years immediately following Bidlisi's initial presentation of *The Eight Paradises*, the Ottoman court increasingly became immersed in a succession struggle between several of Bayezid's adult sons. Initially the dynamics of the struggle were entirely informed by the appointment of the various princes to governorships that were deemed strategically advantageous in the event of a succession crisis. As the Ottomans had no specified constitutional mechanism for the designation of a sultan's successor, royal contenders sought to ensure the allegiance of the most powerful and influential elements of the palace and central administration. In this case, seizure of the central treasury – and with it the ability to win the allegiance of the household regiments – often marked the most decisive development in succession struggles.¹²⁶ Consequently, in the years before a sultan's death, his sons actively vied for governorships with short and unobstructed lines of communication with Istanbul.

¹²⁵ On January 10, 1511, Bidlisi is listed as an instructor in the school (*madrasa*) of 'Ali Pasha, *İnamat Defteri* Muallim Cevdet O.71, 417; Genç, "Acem'den Rum'a," 221.

¹²⁶ Halil İnalcık, "Salım," *EF*².

Since Bidlisi's arrival in Ottoman lands, Bayezid's sons engaged in complicated political maneuvers to solicit and maintain a hold on the most proximate governorships.¹²⁷

During this period of political maneuvering among the princes, Prince Ahmed's paramount position as Bayezid's likely successor gradually eroded. While he still enjoyed the strong backing of most of the high statesmen, including the grand vizier, the chief military judge, and the chancellor, the growing support among the janissaries and other military figures increasingly challenged his path to the throne, especially in the wake of Selim's successful military activities against Shah Isma'il in Erzincan in 1507, and raids in Georgia in the following year.¹²⁸ The ramifications of a shifting political climate not only affected the positions of the various princes, but also potentially threatened the futures of all those who were closely associated with a prince whose bid for sovereignty ended in failure. For instance, a generation earlier, the scramble for the throne following the death of Mehmed II in 1481 entailed considerable chaos and led to the murder of Mehmed's grand vizier Karamani Mehmed Pasha.¹²⁹ Potential hazards were not limited to the highest statesman; it is possible that Tursun Beğ, an able administrator and historian of Mehmed's reign, presented his history to Bayezid as part of a strategy to reinstate himself at court after he had supported Bayezid's brother, Cem, in the succession struggle.¹³⁰

The dangers of a poorly chosen patron were likely not lost on Bidlisi, who had spent the bulk of his professional career navigating the political intrigue and succession struggles among the Aqquyunlu. While Bidlisi certainly made clear his association with Ahmed, through the presentation of unique works, as well as high praise in *The Eight Paradises*, he no doubt discerned the potential pitfalls of such an alliance and sought opportunities to hedge his bet. In fact, in the immediate wake of *The Eight Paradises*' initial presentation at court, he sought to cultivate a relationship with Selim through a panegyric supportive of the prince's claim to

¹²⁷ Çıpa, *The Making of Selim*, 32–34.

¹²⁸ For a discussion of the pro-Ahmed party at the Ottoman court, see *ibid.*, 70–75; on Selim's activities and their effects within Ottoman lands, see *ibid.*, 35–36; Emecen, *Yavuz Selim*, 35–7.

¹²⁹ Şehabeddin Tekindağ, "Fatih'in Ölümü Meselesi," *Tarih Dergisi* 16 (1966): 95–108; İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, "Fatih Sultan Mehmed'in Ölümü," *Belleten* 39 (1975): 473–81.

¹³⁰ Kemalpaşazade, *Tevârîh-i Âl-ı Osmân. VIII Defter: (transkripsiyon)*, ed. Ahmet Uğur (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1997), 20.

sovereignty: "Sultan Selim Shah upon the Caesarian throne / would arrive in kingship to the rank of Anushirvan!"¹³¹ Beyond this general articulation of Selim's suitability for rule, Bidlisi acknowledges the complexity of the brewing succession struggle by expressing the hope that Bayezid recognize Selim's celestially mandated kingship: "O King, by the order of your father, the refuge of the world / Attention! The king named by heaven, the Lord of the Auspicious Conjunction (*Sahib-qiran*) arrives."¹³² The line suggests that as early as 1506, Bidlisi was fully cognizant of the growing significance of the succession struggle and offered his support and well wishes to Selim.

In more practical terms, Bidlisi also strengthened his relationship with the prince through other more immediately discernible ties. In fact, one of Bidlisi's sons entered formal service with Selim before his accession. While Bidlisi's son Ebu'l-Fazl Mehmed pursued a scholarly career, another son, Ebu'l-Mevahib, entered the Ottoman military establishment. By 1510 Ebu'l-Mevahib was counted among the household men-at-arms (*az jama'at-i silahshuriyan*).¹³³ Clearly, he was also among those palace soldiers who favored Selim's succession, for, two years later, he was counted among Selim's men when the new sultan entered Istanbul in April 1512.¹³⁴ Although Bidlisi was not residing in Ottoman domains at the time of Selim's consolidation of power, his son's service to Selim may have played a small role in the rehabilitation of Bidlisi's reputation and Selim's request that the scholar return from his place of residence in the Hijaz.¹³⁵

Even if Bidlisi's fortunes would eventually improve with the accession of Selim, he felt increasingly isolated in the final years of Bayezid's reign. In a subsequent recollection of this period, he placed the blame for his misfortune on the animosity of Bayezid's grand vizier, 'Ali Pasha, and chief military judge, Mü'eyyedzade.¹³⁶ Bidlisi identified the root of this animosity in the two statesmen's jealousy and claimed that the two conspired to exclude him from any high position of state and denied him permission to undertake the pilgrimage to Mecca. Incidentally, the two leading statesmen were among the most vocal supporters of Prince Ahmed. This fact was crucial. Political developments in 1511 eliminated both these men as

¹³¹ Bidlīsī, *Majmū'a*, Ms. Esad Efendi 1888, 89b.

¹³² Ibid., 90a.

¹³³ *İnâmat Defteri*, Muallım Cevdet O.71, p. 411.

¹³⁴ TSMA D. 2921, 8a.

¹³⁵ For details on Selim's invitation for Bidlisi to return to Ottoman lands from his residence in Mecca, see Chapter 3.

¹³⁶ Bidlīsī, *HB*, 633a/b.

major officers within the Ottoman administration and provided Bidlisi with an opportunity to escape what he judged to be a hopeless personal situation. In March 1511, a suspected disciple of Isma‘il named Şahkulu fomented a rebellion among the Turkmen tribes of Anatolia.¹³⁷ Although ‘Ali Pasha successfully defeated the rebellion, he was killed in the culminating confrontation with Şahkulu’s supporters.¹³⁸ Later in the summer of 1511, Selim was defeated by Bayezid in a bid to take power, but the ensuing riot of his janissary supporters in Istanbul unsettled Bayezid, who, in an effort to placate them dismissed Mü‘eyyedzade from his office along with a number of the other leading supporters of Ahmed.¹³⁹

The removal of Bidlisi’s perceived enemies opened the way for his departure from Ottoman lands. The swift moving events and reversals of fortune underscored the volatility of the political situation for all men at court. In this context, Bidlisi’s renewal of his pilgrimage quest also suggests a clearly calculated bid to remove himself from political entanglements, the portents of which promised further violence and disorder. Bidlisi later characterized his departure solely in terms of the fulfillment of his long-desired spiritual aim, nonetheless his departure and absence from Ottoman lands conveniently coincided with the volatile period of transition between Sultan Bayezid and Selim, which resulted in the death of all of Selim’s brothers and most of his nephews.¹⁴⁰

DISAPPOINTMENT AND DEPARTURE

Even if Bidlisi viewed his departure for the Hijaz as the fulfillment of a long-desired religious obligation, he also acknowledged that his departure signified an acceptance of his failure to attain a satisfactory place among the Ottomans. On the one hand, the permission to make the pilgrimage marked the realization of a long-held wish. Since his departure from Tabriz almost ten years earlier, he had made clear his intention to visit the holy cities in the Hijaz. On the other hand, the immediate circumstances that enabled the journey must have underscored a deep sense of failure for Bidlisi. He had spent ten years among the Ottomans during which time he composed a major history for the dynasty, yet throughout this period he was unable to attain the sort of standing and position that he

¹³⁷ Çıpa, *The Making of Selim*, 43–8; Emecen, *Yavuz Selim*, 59–60.

¹³⁸ Çıpa, *The Making of Selim*, 46; Emecen, *Yavuz Selim*, 61–62.

¹³⁹ Çıpa, *The Making of Selim*, 52–3; Emecen, *Yavuz Selim*, 61–62.

¹⁴⁰ Çıpa, *The Making of Selim*, 58–60.

deemed commensurate with his previous experiences as one of the principal officers of a major sultanate.

Some time during his residency in the Hijaz, Bidlisi reflected upon his treatment among the Ottomans and penned a letter to Bayezid, which enumerated his mistreatment at the hands of the sultan's servants.¹⁴¹ The document reflects Bidlisi's sense of misfortune in the final years of his residence at court, but, as with many of Bidlisi's reflections upon his personal situation, the letter ultimately highlights the discrepancy between Bidlisi's expectations and his actual experience. The letter establishes a narrative of Bidlisi's treatment at the Ottoman court with the composition and reception of *The Eight Paradises* as its focal point. Bidlisi recounts Bayezid's order to write a history of the Ottoman dynasty from the beginning up to the present and reiterates his strenuous efforts to complete the work in two and a half years. On account of these efforts, he says, the lasting memory (*zîkr-i jamîl*) of the Ottomans is now widespread and well renowned throughout the lands. Unfortunately, due to the jealousy of the sultan's servants, his efforts were met with unfulfilled promises. Although Bidlisi does not specify the exact particulars of these promises, he indicates that the court failed to fulfill the assurances of monetary compensation and appointment to office that were made during the writing process.¹⁴² While Bidlisi's claim belies the fact that he was rewarded handsomely for his history, his assertion suggests strongly that he expected his efforts to be recognized through appointment to high office. Instead, Bidlisi claims that the work was met with the derision of high statesmen, who even went so far as to send one of the volumes of his history to Mengli Giray Khan, a ruler whom Bidlisi characterizes as an ineloquent Turk.¹⁴³ As a consequence of the criticism he received, Bidlisi refused to finish the preface of the history and requested to take a leave of the court in order to perform the pilgrimage. Bidlisi claims that his request was denied until 1511, at which point he was permitted to leave, but not in accordance with the support and fanfare befitting his status.¹⁴⁴

Bidlisi's decision to depart Ottoman lands for the pilgrimage – although the result of his particular circumstances – is consonant with the broader pattern of scholarly mobility and independence during this period.

¹⁴¹ TSMA E. 5675.

¹⁴² TSMA E. 5675 (line 15).

¹⁴³ "To add to my sadness, they (the high statesmen) offered the book of history to some Turks who are not from among the class of eloquent ones (*ba'zî turkan ra ki na az maslak-i bulagha*)," TSMA E. 5675.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

For however much Bidlisi sought to secure an honored place at the Ottoman court, he held no special allegiance to the Ottoman enterprise. After all, he had already worked for decades to advance the interests of another dynasty and within months of his departure he endeavored to cultivate a personal relationship with the Mamluk sultan through the presentation of a new work.¹⁴⁵ While the Ottoman dynasty likely represented a praiseworthy example of rule, Bidlisi's more fundamental loyalties lay in a set of ideals concerning the implementation of a just and righteous order, which could be embraced by any Muslim court at the time. In this way, Bidlisi's professional outlook mirrored the attitude assumed by most scholars of the fifteenth century who accepted positions of temporal authority. For all of these men, the multiplicity of rulers and patrons along with the possibility for movement ensured a modicum of independence of conscience and action. If better opportunities materialized elsewhere or if the demands of a ruler interfered with a scholar's worldview, the scholar could seek other opportunities to exercise his talents and seek his fortune in other lands.

During the final years of Bayezid's reign, Bidlisi initiated communication with leading members of Shah Isma'il's court in an effort to reconcile with the Qizilbash and explore the possibility of a return to his homeland. Beginning in 1510, Bidlisi began a correspondence with several of Isma'il's high statesmen, including Amir 'Abd al-Vahhab, Bidlisi's one-time colleague in the Aqquyunlu royal council and, since 1506, the minister of religious affairs (*shaykh al-islam*) for Shah Isma'il.¹⁴⁶ Around this time, in a letter addressed to "some of the grandees in Iran," Bidlisi regrets having left Tabriz: "What misfortunes have I not seen in separation from the gate of friends! / Emigration is the desire of separation; grief, the vision of separation."¹⁴⁷ More provocatively, around 1511, he composed a panegyric poem in praise of Isma'il on the occasion of the shah's recent victory over the Uzbeks in Khurasan at the Battle of Marv in December 1510.¹⁴⁸ The poem praises Isma'il as a sovereign who unites the temporal and spiritual realms and descendant of 'Ali whose rule emerged under a happy celestial conjunction.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁵ Bidlīsī, *Asrār 'ibādat al-ṣiyyām*, SK Ms. Ayasofya 1994.

¹⁴⁶ Bidlīsī, *Munsha'āt*, Ms. Esad Efendi 1888, 148b–149b; Genç "Acem'den Rum'a," 214.

¹⁴⁷ Bidlīsī, *Munsha'āt*, Ms. Esad Efendi 1888, 148a.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 144a–47a.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 144a.

Such sentiments as expressed in this poetry appear in stark contrast with his subsequent stance. During the reign of Selim, Bidlisi was one of the most vocal critics of Isma'il and his activities on the Ottoman campaign against the Qizilbash in 1514 were critical to its success. Ultimately, Bidlisi's overtures to Isma'il and his leading statesmen underscore the great ambivalence that he felt regarding the rise of Isma'il. There is little doubt that he was appalled initially by the violence and destruction wrought by the Qizilbash revolution. Yet, in the years since Isma'il's rise, a number of prominent religious officials and state functionaries had reconciled their differences with Isma'il and joined his nascent administration. The influence of these new administrative recruits likely had a mitigating effect on the most unpalatable aspects of the shah's early rhetoric of conquest and rule and may have warmed Bidlisi to the prospects of a return home. When measured against the hopelessness with which he viewed his future prospects in Ottoman lands during the final years of Bayezid's reign, repatriation through reconciliation with Shah Isma'il appealed to him on some level.

Pilgrimage to Mecca offered Bidlisi the best opportunity to withdraw from the Ottoman court – whether such withdrawal was intended to be temporary or facilitate a more permanent move elsewhere. Throughout this period, pilgrimage was an important mechanism by which scholars absolved themselves of their commitments to a particular patron. While sultans often required the continuing residence of those who had received their support, they found it difficult to deny a scholar indefinitely his request to fulfill the religious obligation of pilgrimage to the holy cities. Scholars were aware of this and often used the pilgrimage as a means of escape from political difficulties. For instance, Sultan Mehmed's tutor and chief military judge, Molla Gürani, himself an émigré, left for Egypt after a falling out with the sultan over the particular duties and prerogatives of his office.¹⁵⁰ Although Gürani eventually returned, this was never a foregone conclusion. In fact, a few years after Gürani's return, Sultan Mehmed wrote to another itinerant scholar, Fathullah Shirvani, who had taken up residence in the Hijaz after having received the Ottoman sultan's patronage and promised him spiritual and material gifts if Shirvani returned to Ottoman domains.¹⁵¹ Therefore, sultans often felt obligated to entice a

¹⁵⁰ Ahmed ibn Mustafa Taşköprüzade, *al-Shaqā'iq al-nu'māniyah fī 'ulamā' al-Dawlat al-Uthmāniyah*, ed. Ahmed Subhi Furat (Istanbul: Edebiyat Fakültesi Basımevi, 1985), 85.

¹⁵¹ Sa'di Çelebi Tacizade, *Fatih devrine ait münşeat mecmuası*, eds. Necâti Lugal and Adnan Erzi (Istanbul: İstanbul Matbaası, 1956), 45.

scholar's return before his departure. Bidlisi makes clear that he expected gifts in recognition of his undertaking,¹⁵² and, in fact, Bayezid's gift register includes a number of entries for scholars who were about to depart on pilgrimage.¹⁵³

Consequently, Bidlisi's departure for pilgrimage signified a severing of ties with the Ottomans. The court confiscated Bidlisi's usufruct grants, while Bidlisi, for his part, cultivated a relationship with Isma'il and the Mamluk sultan Qansawh al-Ghawri upon his arrival in Cairo. Such actions indicate that both parties considered his departure as a possible final farewell. In this light, Bidlisi's eventual return most immediately reflects the drastically altered political landscape precipitated by the accession of Selim, as much as it suggests any continuing commitment on Bidlisi's part to the Ottoman dynasty. With all of these misgivings and uncertainties, Bidlisi boarded a ship in September 1511 and set sail for Egypt.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵² TSMA E. 5675.

¹⁵³ For instance, on November 28, 1509, Mawlana Babak Çelebi received a gift of 10,000 silver aspers as he set out for Mecca (*İnamat Defteri*, MC O.71 p. 356).

¹⁵⁴ *İnamat Defteri*, Muallım Cevdet O.71, p. 464.

The Return East, 1511–1520

PATRONAGE AND THE ROYAL IMAGE AT THE COURT OF QANSAWH AL-GHAWRI

Bidlisi journeyed by ship from Istanbul to Alexandria, and from there he continued up the Nile as far as Cairo.¹ His arrival in the Mamluk capital several months before the departure of the Egyptian pilgrimage caravan afforded him time to meet with prominent residents of the city, including the sultan, Qansawh al-Ghawri, and leading members of the Mamluk court.² Indeed, even before his arrival in Cairo, Bidlisi asserts that Qansawh took an interest in news of his approach and sent a welcoming party to greet the scholar.³

The arrival of prominent pilgrims from Ottoman lands occasionally offered the Mamluk sultan an opportunity to demonstrate his largesse by hosting these travelers for extended periods in Cairo. Two years before Bidlisi's journey, in 1509, one of Sultan Bayezid's sons, Korkud, renounced his claim to rule and struck out for Mecca via Egypt, where he intended to devote himself entirely to scholarly activities. Over the course of the next year, the Mamluk sultan offered the Ottoman prince a place of residence, a generous monthly stipend, ceremonial robes, horses, golden

¹ Bidlīsī, *Asrār 'ibādat al-ṣiyām*, 2b; Bidlīsī, *Ibā 'an mawāqī' al-wabā'*, SK Ms. Şehid Ali Paşa 2032, 2a.

² The Egyptian pilgrimage caravan departed Cairo on January 8, 1512, which means that Bidlisi resided in the Mamluk capital for most of the autumn before departing for the Hijaz, Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i' al-zuhūr fī waqā'i' al-duhūr*, ed. Muḥammad Muṣṭafā (Cairo: commissioned by F. Steiner, Wiesbaden, 1960), 4:239.

³ Bidlīsī, *HB*, 634a.

saddles, and other gifts.⁴ Throughout the year, Qansawh frequently feted the Ottoman prince with public banquets around Cairo and private parties in the citadel. While the Mamluk sultan certainly offered this patronage in the hopes of cultivating an Ottoman ally, the gifts and ceremonies also garnered prestige for Qansawh as a protector of royalty and mediator among kings.⁵ Similarly, the Mamluk court seized upon the ideological value of Korkud's plea for assistance and memorialized the Ottoman prince's visit in a number of literary works that portrayed the Mamluk sultan as a great protector of powerful lords, among whom Korkud's mention features prominently.⁶

Qansawh's patronage of Bidlisi unfolded along similar, albeit significantly more limited lines. As he had done for the Ottoman prince, Qansawh dispatched several of his servants to greet the traveling scholar. Bidlisi adds that Qansawh invited him to the citadel where he personally met with the ruler.⁷ Qansawh bestowed upon Bidlisi gifts and other beneficences and in exchange Bidlisi offered several scholarly works of his own composition.⁸ Although Bidlisi was in the midst of a religious pilgrimage, he evidently desired the hospitality of the Mamluk court. In the preface to a treatise on fasting, which he presented to Qansawh in late 1511, he asserts that he composed the work as "a pretext to ascend the summit of the sultan's threshold."⁹ While in Cairo, Bidlisi participated in

⁴ Nabil al-Tikriti, "The Ḥajj as Justifiable Self-Exile: Şehzade Korkud's Wasīlat Al-Aḥbāb (915–916/1509–1510)," *Al-Masāq* 17, 1 (2005): 132.

⁵ Ibn Iyas notes that Korkud kissed Qansawh al-Ghawri's hand and placed it on his forehead in a ceremonial display, Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i' al-zubūr fī waqā'i' al-duḥūr*, 4:154; İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, "II'inci Bayezid'in oğullarından Sultan Korkut," *Bellekten* 30, 120 (1966): 554; Tikriti, "The Ḥajj as Justifiable Self-Exile," 132.

⁶ One of these works recounts several scholarly exchanges between Korkud and scholars at Qansawh al-Ghawri's court, 'Abd al-Wahhāb 'Azzām, *Majālis al-Sultān al-Ghūrī: šafahāt min ta'rīkh Miṣr fī al-qarn al-'āshir al-Hijrī* (Cairo: Maṭba'at Lajnat al-Ta'līf wa-al-Tarjamah wa-al-Nashr, 1941); see also 'Abd al-Bāsiṭ bin Khalīl al-Ḥanafī al-Malāṭī. *Kitāb al-bustān al-nawrī al-marfū' li-ḥaḍrat al-sultān al-ghawrī*, SK, Ayasofya 4793, 4a; for a discussion of al-Malati's work, see Christian Mauder, "Herrschaftsbegründung durch Handlung. 'Abd al-Bāsiṭ al-Malāṭīs (st. 1514 in Kairo), *al-Mağmū' al-bustān an-nawrī* al-Mağmū' al-bustān an-nawrī" ('Die erblühende Gartensammlung'), *Das Mittelalter* 20, 1 (2015): 29–46.

⁷ Bidlīsī, *HB*, 634a.

⁸ In the conclusion to *The Eight Paradises*, Bidlisi notes that he presented several scholarly works before the wise sultan. As a show of respect, Qansawh extended various beneficences (ibid.).

⁹ Bidlīsī, *Asrār 'ibādat al-ṣiyyām*, 4a.

several gatherings of scholars and notables organized by the sultan, in which he claims that Qansawh distinguished him with many favors.¹⁰

While Bidlisi's recollection of Qansawh's patronage in the conclusion to *The Eight Paradises* was likely construed to elicit an equally magnanimous response from the Ottoman sultan Selim, the general tenor of his remarks is in accord with the patterns of patronage at the Mamluk court. In fact, Bidlisi's status as a foreign and transient visitor with literary abilities in both Persian and Arabic complemented the cosmopolitan outlook of Qansawh al-Ghawri's court, which, in many ways, mirrored the preoccupations of contemporary royal courts, such as the Ottomans and Timurids.¹¹ Like Bayezid, the Mamluk sultan embraced a literary program in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish. In addition to his own poetry in Turkish and Persian, Qansawh commissioned the translation of Firdawsi's *Shahnama* (*Book of Kings*) into Turkish in 1507.¹² In works such as *Kitab nafa'is al-majalis al-sultaniya* (*Delicacies of Sultanic Gatherings*, 1504) and *Kitab kawkab al-durri* (*The Brilliant Star*, 1511), courtiers of the Mamluk sultan recorded and edited their recollections of Qansawh's learned gatherings.¹³ The topics of these discussions ranged from religious and philosophical questions to historical and literary anecdotes. In all of the works, the compilers demonstrated the refinement and erudition of the sultan by underscoring the wisdom of his repartee with learned men. Consequently, Bidlisi's talents as a master of eloquence and rhetoric, as well as his desire to ingratiate himself with the sultan through the dedication of literary works, would have been well received by Qansawh

¹⁰ Bidlisi, *HB*, 634b.

¹¹ Barbara Flemming first cast light on Mamluk barracks as loci of literary production (Barbara Flemming, "Şerif, Sultan Gavri und die 'Perser,'" *Der Islam* 45 (1969): 81–93); Robert Irwin has examined the literary products of Qansawh al-Ghawri's court in relation to Mamluk rulership (Robert Irwin, "The Political Thinking of the 'Virtuous Ruler,' Qānshūh Al-Ghawrī," *Mamluk Studies Review* 12, 1 [2006]: 37–49); see also Christian Mauder "In the Sultan's Salon: Learning, Religion, and Rulership at the Mamluk Court of Qānīshawh al-Ghawrī (r. 1501–1516)," Ph.D. diss. (University of Göttingen, 2017).

¹² For Qansawh al-Ghawri's *divan*, see Mehmet Yalçın, *The Divân of Qānshūh Al-Ghūrī*, (Istanbul: Bay, 2002); for the Turkish version of Firdawsi's *Book of Kings*, see Kültürel and Beyreli, *Şerifi Şehnâme çevirisi* (Ankara: Türk Dil Kurumu, 1999); Jan Schmidt, "The Reception of Firdausi's *Shahnama* among the Ottomans," in *Shahnama Studies II the Reception of Firdausi's Shahnama*, eds. C. P. Melville and Gabrielle Rachel Van den Berg, vol. 2 (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 119–39; for Qansawh al-Ghawri's connections with Persian émigrés, see Flemming, "Şerif, Sultan Gavri und die 'Perser.'"

¹³ These two works were published in a single volume in 1941, see 'Azzām, *Majālis al-Sultān al-Ghūrī*.

al-Ghawri during a period of his reign in which sponsorship of scholars and litterateurs constituted a discernible priority for the sultan.

The cultural outlook of Qansawh al-Ghawri's court also had important ramifications for the ideological underpinnings of the Mamluk Sultanate. As many literary works encouraged by the court were composed by Persian émigrés in Mamluk lands, they frequently reflected the broader ideological currents of the turn of the sixteenth century. In contrast to most Mamluk chronicles, which substantiated the sultan's claim to rule through his association with the Abbasid caliph, these works freely appropriated and adapted the vocabulary of sovereignty that proliferated in Persian lands after the rise of Timur. To be sure, the works produced at Qansawh's court still celebrated the traditional touchstones of Mamluk sovereignty, but to these titles, the works added grandiose claims of cosmic significance: In 1504, Husayn ibn Muhammad al-Husayni lauded Qansawh al-Ghawri as the lord of conjunction (*sahib-qiran*) and commander of the faithful (*amir al-mu'minin*) in the conclusion to *Delicacies of Sultanic Gatherings*.¹⁴ A few years later in 1507, the émigré Sharif Husayn ibn Hasan declared Qansawh al-Ghawri the *sahib-qiran* in the preface to his translation of Firdawsi's *Book of Kings*.¹⁵

Another work completed in 1515, a few years after Bidlisi's Cairene sojourn, employed equally innovative titles for the Mamluk sultan and offered a detailed biographical portrait of Qansawh al-Ghawri that recast his humble and servile origins in ideologically potent terms. The work, entitled *Kitab al-'uqud al-jawhariya fi'l-nawadir al-Ghawriya* (*Jeweled Necklaces of Ghawrian Rarities*), assumed the same approach as *Delicacies of Sultanic Gatherings* and *Brilliant Star* by presenting the proceedings of Qansawh's learned gatherings in the form of questions and replies.¹⁶ Like the other works on Qansawh's learned gatherings, *Jeweled Necklaces* was conceived to demonstrate the erudition of the sultan. Moreover, the author emphasizes Qansawh's divine appointment to rule as:

the caliph of the world by right and verification, the erector of the bases of Islam and faith, the greatest of the kings of the age and the imam of the tenth century, master of the seat of fidelity in the world and the hereafter, the ruler of the banner

¹⁴ 'Azzām, *Majālis al-Sulṭān al-Ghūrī*, 147.

¹⁵ Kültüral and Beyreli, *Şerîfî Şehnâme çevirisi*, 14.

¹⁶ Two of the works four planned sections are preserved in two volumes, *al-'Uqud al-jawhariya fi'l-nawadir al-ghawriya*, SK Mss. Ayasofya 3312, 3313.

of universal sovereignty (*liwa al-wilaya 'ala al-afaq*), the possessor of the throne of the caliphate by merit, the one who strives for the attainment of the canopy of peace and security, the imitator of the injunction: "Surely God bids to justice and good-doing,"¹⁷ the commander of the faithful and caliph of the Muslims.¹⁸

The list of Qansawh's attributes of sovereignty focuses on his suitability to assume the caliphate by right (*haqq*) and merit (*istihqaq*). In fact, the titles afforded Qansawh included appellations that, in the context of Mamluk diplomatic protocol, were normally reserved exclusively for the Abbasid caliph. The author substantiates Qansawh's claim to the caliphate on the basis of his good deeds and through his status as the imam of the tenth century. The reference to the centennial imamate refers to Qansawh's status as the renewer of the age (*mujaddid*). Indeed, the allusion to renewal among Qansawh's attributes is made explicit a few lines later in the preface, when the author echoes the famous prophetic tradition on renewal (*tajdid*) and asks God to "make him (Qansawh) among the promised ones of every one hundred years who renews the faith and the tradition of the prophet."¹⁹

This image of the sultan is also in keeping with the broader currents of court panegyrics popular outside of Syria and Egypt. Timurid histories throughout the fifteenth century sought to cast Timur's birth and subsequent career as the hallmark of divinely and celestially mandated rule.²⁰ As substantiated by the examples of Sharif Husayn and Husayn ibn Muhammad, the main drivers of this innovation were Persian émigré courtiers who benefited from the patronage and cosmopolitan proclivities of the Mamluk sultan. Indeed, the occurrence of these novel appellations in a work commissioned by the court underscores the dynamics by which patronage and the circulation of men and ideas interacted to promote the appropriation and adaptation of relatively new vocabularies of sovereignty throughout the central lands of Islam. Bidlisi's honored treatment by Qansawh and participation in court life is emblematic of this process. Although he firmly resolved to carry on his journey to Mecca, he likely considered, if at all briefly, a longer sojourn at such a receptive court.

¹⁷ Qur'ān, 16:90.

¹⁸ *al-'Uqūd al-jawharīya*, Ms. Ayasofya 3312, 2b.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Sharaf al-Dīn Yazdī. *Zafarnāma*. For discussions of Timur's birth as an event of celestial significance, see also Melville, "Mongol and Timurid Periods," 190; Beatrice Forbes Manz, "Tamerlane's Career and Its Uses," *Journal of World History* 13, 1 (2002): 1–26.

THE MECCAN INTERLUDE

Despite the temptations of Qansawh's court, Bidlisi was firmly resolved to complete the pilgrimage. Before his departure from Cairo on January 8, 1512, Bidlisi secured a royal decree guaranteeing his protection in Mamluk lands for the duration of his pilgrimage and residence in the Hijaz.²¹ While such decrees were routinely issued to prominent travelers within a ruler's domains, the guarantee of Bidlisi's safety carried added significance in 1511, as several years preceding Bidlisi's pilgrimage were marred by considerable dangers and violence visited upon pilgrims as they journeyed to the Hijaz.²²

Bidlisi's arrival in Mecca permitted him to fulfill his long-held desire to perform the pilgrimage. Once in Mecca, Bidlisi met scholars and Sufis from across Islamic domains and engaged in a period of scholarly exchange and literary production that lasted for more than one year.²³ During this period, Bidlisi reconnected with mystical matters he had first considered as his father's student in Tabriz in 1471–72, but had largely abandoned during the intervening decades, when so much of his energies were devoted to court service for the Aqqyunlu and Ottomans.²⁴ Most importantly, he rekindled his interest in the mystical work of Mahmud Shabistari. While in Mecca, Bidlisi bonded with a scholar from Khurasan through discussion of Shabistari's *Haqq al-yaqin* (*Truth of Certainty*), an experience that inspired Bidlisi to write a commentary on the great Sufi's epistle.²⁵

The intimate exchange between Bidlisi and the Khurasani scholar was emblematic of a much broader set of exchanges in which Bidlisi participated during his year in the Hijaz. By 1511, Bidlisi had reached the age of fifty-six lunar years and was recognized by his peers as a learned scholar and capable teacher. Not surprisingly then, he attracted the attention of

²¹ In the conclusion to *The Eight Paradises*, Bidlisi notes that Qansawh gave him a royal writ (*hukm*) for protection on his travels in Mamluk lands, Bidlisi, *HB*, 634b. On the date of the caravan's departure, see Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i' al-zuhūr fī waqā'i' al-duhūr*, 4:249.

²² For an example of a similar decree of safe passage issued by Bayezid II to a Persian scholar on pilgrimage, see Chapter 2 and Feridun Beğ, *Münşe'āt es-selātin*, SK Ms. Reisülkütüb 892, 96a. On the political chaos in the Hijaz at the root of this instability, see John Lash Meloy, *Imperial Power and Maritime Trade: Mecca and Cairo in the Later Middle Ages* (Chicago: published by the Middle East Documentation Center on behalf of the Center for Middle Eastern Studies, University of Chicago, 2010), 209–12.

²³ On the duration of his sojourn, see Bidlisi, *HB*, 634b.

²⁴ Bidlisi, *Haqq al-mubīn*, 4a.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 4b.

younger students in the Hijaz who hoped to benefit from his erudition and experience. One such student was ‘Abd al-Samad Diyarbakri, a future judge in the Ottoman administration of Egypt and the author of an important Turkish history of Egypt under the Ottomans, who met Bidlisi in Taif in the summer of 1512, and, impressed by Bidlisi’s reputation for learning among the other pilgrims, passed the summer studying with Bidlisi in the mountains outside of Mecca.²⁶

In addition to teaching and studying with other scholars, Bidlisi also recommenced work on *The Eight Paradises*. Although the main body of the work had been completed and presented to Bayezid in 1506, Bidlisi did not compose an introduction or conclusion for his history before its circulation. The lack of an introduction was a cause for some criticism from certain quarters of the court, yet Bidlisi defended those criticisms by pointing out that he had composed and completed the work to the specifications of the sultan. Even so, he desired to include an introduction and used his relative seclusion in the mountains around Mecca as an opportunity to return to his *magnum opus*.²⁷ His decision to take up the work was likely encouraged by the interest it garnered from other scholars in Mecca. The pilgrimage facilitated the circulation of scholarly works, as pilgrims often brought books from their homeland to be shared and copied by others from far-flung lands. In a letter to Bayezid written from Mecca, Bidlisi defended his history in response to the criticisms of courtiers and remarked that even in Mecca “a number of scholars copied the book and would bring it to India and other places, even though the book was missing an introduction and conclusion.”²⁸ Although it appears that the Indian scholars copied the history without the introduction, Bidlisi finished this section of the work in the latter part of 1512 before he left Mecca to return to Ottoman lands (See Figure 5.1).²⁹ The introduction that Bidlisi composed for *The Eight Paradises* presented a distillation of his

²⁶ On ‘Abd al-Samad Diyarbakri, see Benjamin Lellouch, *Les Ottomans en Egypte: historiens et conquérants au XVI^e siècle* (Louvain: Peeters, 2006); in his history, ‘Abd al-Samad mentions that he met Bidlisi in Taif at the time of the fruit harvest (‘Abd al-Samad Diyarbakri, *Tercüme en-nüzhe es-seniyye fî zikri’l-hulefâ ve’l-mülûki’l-müşriyye*, British Library, Ms. Add. 7846, 7b–8a).

²⁷ ‘Abd al-Samad notes that while residing in Taif, Bidlisi was writing a history of the Ottomans (Diyarbakri, *Tercüme en-nüzhe*, 7b).

²⁸ TSMA E. 5675.

²⁹ Bidlisi, *Hasht bihisht*, Ms. Ayasofya 3541, 14a; for discussion of the manuscripts of *The Eight Paradises*, see Markiewicz, “The Crisis of Rule,” 399–409.

thinking on kingship and history as the two concepts related to the place of the Ottoman house within a broad narrative of Islamic history.

While Bidlisi's newfound commitment to *The Eight Paradises* was likely encouraged by the interest in his work on the part of scholars in Mecca, political developments within Ottoman lands also rekindled hope of a vindicating return to the Ottoman court. In the months immediately following Bidlisi's departure from Istanbul in September 1511, Selim renewed his campaign for succession to Bayezid's throne. With the support of the janissaries, Bayezid was forced to abdicate in favor of Selim – and to the detriment of Ahmed and Bayezid's other sons.³⁰ On April 24, 1512, Selim entered Istanbul in triumph and assumed sovereign authority.³¹ Bayezid intended to retire to family holdings in Dimetoka, but died under mysterious circumstances en route.³² Selim's brothers, especially Ahmed, opposed the transfer of power and rose in open rebellion. Over the course of the following thirteen months, Selim consolidated his authority by facing and defeating Ahmed in battle and executing all male relatives with a claim to the sultanate.³³

News of these developments spread relatively slowly to Mamluk lands. An Ottoman envoy arrived in Cairo with the announcement of Selim's accession and the death of Bayezid on Thursday, July 15, 1512, three months after Selim's accession.³⁴ Selim's official announcement did not arrive in the Hijaz until some time later, perhaps in late summer 1512, around the time of Bidlisi's possible return to Mecca from Taif. As a consequence of the slow spread of the official announcement, rumors of the new sultan's accession may have circulated in Mecca even before the arrival of the Ottoman envoy.³⁵ The news was also likely a cause for anxiety on Bidlisi's part, as Selim's feelings towards the absent scholar remained unclear. In fact, Bidlisi claims that he greeted the news as an answer to his prayers, although he worried that the new sultan forgot of his existence during his pilgrimage.³⁶ Bidlisi's fears were only assuaged a

³⁰ Çıpa, *The Making of Selim*, 54–56; Emecen, *Yavuz Sultan Selim*, 62–64.

³¹ Çıpa, *The Making of Selim*, 55.

³² Ibid., 56–58; for contrasting explanations, see Uluçay, M. Çağatay, “Yavuz Sultan Selim nasıl padişah oldu?,” *Tarih Dergisi* 9 (1954): 3–90; Selâhattin Tansel, *Yavuz Sultan Selim* (Ankara: Milli Eğitim Basımevi, 1969), 308–10; Ahmet Uğur, *Yavuz Sultan Selim* (Kayseri: Erciyes Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, 1992), 36; Emecen, *Yavuz Sultan Selim*, 64–70.

³³ Çıpa, *The Making of Selim*, 70.

³⁴ Ibn İyās, *Badā'i' al-zuhūr fī waqā'i' al-duhūr*, 269.

³⁵ Bidlīsī, *HB*, 635a.

³⁶ Ibid.

few months later, when a special messenger arrived from Selim with gifts for Bidlisi and an invitation to return to the court. Notwithstanding this concern and his subsequent relief, Bidlisi likely faced a more fundamental challenge as a result of Selim's invitation. Over the course of the preceding three years, Bidlisi had struck up a correspondence with leading members of Isma'il's court. While he had received no clear indication of a welcoming return, Selim's invitation now forced Bidlisi to decide whether to repatriate to his homeland without his family, who had remained in Istanbul during his pilgrimage, or to return to Ottoman lands.

During Bidlisi's return journey to Ottoman lands, his activities were largely motivated by several conflicting concerns. On the one hand, he continued to cultivate his ascetic sensibility through study and contemplation. On the other hand, he remained fully immersed in worldly matters; during his return journey, he sought to extract himself from his previous overtures to Shah Isma'il while endeavoring to secure a prominent place at the Ottoman court through the preparation of a literary work. Although Bidlisi initially intended to return to Istanbul by ship via Alexandria, his travel plans changed when he received word of the outbreak of plague in Egypt shortly after his departure from Mecca.³⁷ As a consequence, Bidlisi decided to return to Ottoman domains by land via Syria and only returned to Selim's court at Edirne in late 1513 or early 1514.³⁸

To ease his return to Ottoman lands, he presented the new sultan with a treatise on the moral and spiritual implications of avoiding the plague entitled *al-Ibā' 'an mawāqī' al-wabā'* (*On Avoiding Places of Disease*).³⁹ Bidlisi's efforts to induce Selim's compassion and sympathy were essential to his successful return to court. His departure from Ottoman lands in 1511 marked a significant rupture with many of the key men at court and the subsequent correspondence that Bidlisi sent from Mecca not only made clear his sense of mistreatment by the sultan's men, but also leveled serious accusations of misconduct against some of Bayezid's most trusted

³⁷ Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i' al-zuhūr fī waqā'i' al-duhūr*, 4:298.

³⁸ Bidlīsī, *al-Ibā' 'an mawāqī' al-wabā'*, 2a. Bidlisi's arrival to the Ottoman court can be dated based on his presence in Konya at the completion of *Avoidance of Places of Disease* in September 1513 and the autographed completion of a presentation copy of *The Eight Paradises* before the end of 919 (February 1514), Bidlīsī, *al-Ibā' 'an mawāqī' al-wabā'*, 33b; Bidlīsī, *HB*, 636a.

³⁹ Bidlīsī, *al-Ibā' 'an mawāqī' al-wabā'*, 3a; Justin Stearns, "Public Health, the State, and Religious Scholarship."

advisers.⁴⁰ While Selim's accession initiated certain changes to the upper ranks of the court, Bidlisi likely did not know the extent of these changes as he traveled through Syria.⁴¹ Perhaps for this reason, he also sought to strike a conciliatory tone in his correspondence with Selim and other leading statesmen.⁴² In reply to Selim's invitation to return to court, Bidlisi also composed a letter of apology (*ma'zirat-nama*) to the new sultan during his return journey.⁴³ The letter expressed Bidlisi's regret for remaining away from court for so long and reiterated his joy at receiving the news of Selim's desire for his return.

In addition to this correspondence, on his return journey to the Ottoman court, Bidlisi also corresponded with Amir 'Abd al-Vahhab, the minister of religious affairs for Shah Isma'il. As mentioned in Chapter 2, Bidlisi, during his darkest days of isolation in Istanbul at the end of Bayezid's reign, initiated a correspondence with several of Shah Isma'il's grandees to explore the possibility of his repatriation to Iran. Such negotiations unfolded over the course of three years between 1510 and 1513, yet remained unresolved at the time of Selim's accession and invitation to Bidlisi. Consequently, while in Damascus on his return journey to Selim's court, Bidlisi penned a letter to Amir 'Abd al-Vahhab that expressed his enthusiasm for Shah Isma'il, even as it sought to minimize any expectations of Bidlisi's imminent return to Tabriz. Accordingly, the letter dwelt upon the initial unresponsiveness of Shah Isma'il's statesmen, as well as the difficult conditions that would delay Bidlisi's repatriation.⁴⁴ Bidlisi's polite demurral of the shah's interest in his return may have been motivated as much by the personal considerations as by a preference for Selim over Isma'il. After all, Bidlisi left his family in Ottoman domains when he departed for the pilgrimage. Two of his sons – Ebu'l-Fazl Mehmed and Ebu'l-Mevahib – had entered Ottoman service by 1511. Under these circumstances, a return to Tabriz would have constituted an equally difficult personal trial. Yet, beyond these personal considerations, Selim's invitation to Bidlisi was likely appealing; upon his arrival in Ottoman lands in 1513, he was immediately welcomed into the inner circle of Selim's trusted advisers.

⁴⁰ For details of this letter, see Chapter 2. TSMA E. 5675.

⁴¹ For details of these personnel changes, see Markiewicz, "The Crisis of Rule," 190–91.

⁴² In addition to Selim, Bidlisi also corresponded with Ca'fer Çelebi, the recently reappointed chancellor during this period (Bidlisi, *Munshā'āt*, Ms. Esad Efendi 1888, 230a–31a).

⁴³ Ibid., 89a.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 89a.

Even as Bidlisi made these preparations for a political comeback at the Ottoman court, he remained committed to exploring his inner life through contemplation of mystical matters. Bidlisi's passage through Karaman on his return to court no doubt encouraged this contemplative disposition. Even before he set foot in the province, Bidlisi regarded the region as the historical dwelling place of wise and holy men.⁴⁵ In large measure, the region deserved this reputation on account of the many holy men who made its principal city, Konya, their home. Foremost among these, Bidlisi accorded particular praise for Rumi (d. 1273). In addition to Rumi, Bidlisi reserved equal praise for Rumi's contemporary and fellow resident of Konya, Sadr al-Din Muhammad Qunawi (d. 1274). Bidlisi's high regard for Qunawi stemmed from the learned saint's seminal position within the tradition of Sufi learning as it developed after the death of Ibn al-'Arabi in 1240. Qunawi was one of the closest disciples and son-in-law of Ibn al-'Arabi and became the greatest exegete of his master's mystical thought through his careful and clear explication of Ibn al-'Arabi's teachings in rational and philosophical terms.⁴⁶ In fact, the clarity of Qunawi's thought rendered his works essential tools for most students of Sufism as they sought to access the central tenets of Ibn al-'Arabi's teachings. While in Konya, Bidlisi spent forty days beside the tomb of Sadr al-Din Qunawi in mystical contemplation of the great Sufi's masterpiece, *Miftah al-ghayb* (*The Key to the Hidden Realm*), an experience he later credited with unlocking some of the secrets of Shabistari's *The Truth of Certainty*.⁴⁷ The incident is significant, insofar as it establishes the interconnected nature of Qunawi and Shabistari's thought in the minds of sixteenth-century learned men and the uses to which their work could be put for unraveling the intricacies of Ibn al-'Arabi's teachings. As we will see in Chapter 6, the works of all these Sufis would bear directly upon Bidlisi's conception of the caliphate.

Bidlisi's consideration of Shabistari's work continued as he traveled on from Konya. While still in Karaman, Bidlisi stopped in the town of Akşehir, where he was reunited with Baba Ni'matullah Nakhjavani, a

⁴⁵ Bidlisi, *HB*, 369b–370a.

⁴⁶ For Qunawi's role in the transmission of Ibn al-'Arabi's ideas, see William C. Chittick, "The Last Will and Testament of Ibn 'Arabi's Foremost Disciple and Some Notes on Its Author," *Sophia Perennis* 4 (1978): 43–58; William C. Chittick, "Sadr Al-Din Qunawi on the Oneness of Being," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 21, 2 (1981): 171–84; Claude Addas, *Quest for the Red Sulphur: The Life of Ibn 'Arabi*, trans. Peter Kingsley (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1993), 230–33; Richard Todd, *The Sufi Doctrine of Man: Šadr Al-Dīn Al-Qūnawī's Metaphysical Anthropology* (Leiden: Brill, 2014).

⁴⁷ Bidlisi, *Haqq al-mubīn*, 5b.

renowned Sufi associated with the Naqshbandi order under whom Bidlisi had studied as a young man in Tabriz. Bidlisi's high regard for Ni'matullah and his decision to spend some time in Akşehir comparing copies of Shabistari's *Haqq al-yaqin* highlights the fluid Sufi affiliations Bidlisi embraced. Despite his early upbringing beside Muhammad Nurbakhsh and the lifelong regard he showed the fifteenth-century Shi'i *mahdi*, Bidlisi freely solicited the mystical expertise of Sunni-oriented Naqshbandi Sufi masters. Moreover, this period of study, and indeed all of his ascetic activities on his return journey, stand in stark contrast to his careful preparations for a successful return to court life.

THE CHALDIRAN CAMPAIGN

Bidlisi returned to an Ottoman royal court completely transformed by the political turmoil of the preceding two years. In contrast to Bayezid's reluctance to confront the threats posed by Shah Isma'il, Selim had risen to power largely through the support of military constituencies for whom aggressive martial policies represented the best opportunities for material advancement.⁴⁸ Bidlisi certainly noticed the stark divergence between Bayezid's pacific policy and the energetic stance of the new sultan, for in the revised version of *The Eight Paradises* that he presented to Selim, he lauded the sultan's interest and willingness to take the field against his enemies and contrasted it with the young sultan's father, who stood for saintly virtues of nonaggression and ultimately a rejection of worldly matters.⁴⁹ In fact, even before Selim completely secured the throne through the elimination of his male relatives, he consulted a geomancer on the prospects of campaigning against his brother, Ahmed, the Knights of St. John at Rhodes, or Isma'il in Iran.⁵⁰ Selim's express desire to embark on military campaigns garnered for him an early reputation as a sultan set on the idea of conquest. For this martial enthusiasm, several panegyrists – including Bidlisi's own son, Ebu'l-Fazl Mehmed – celebrated the new sultan in the first months of his reign as a celestially appointed world conqueror through the application of the term *sahib-qiran*.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Çıpa, *The Making of Selim*, 85.

⁴⁹ Bidlīsī, *HB*, 624b.

⁵⁰ TSMA E. 6673.

⁵¹ Ebu'l-Fazl Mehmed Efendi, *Inshā*, 68a; *Qaşıda-yi Sulṭān Salīm*, Hacı Selim Ağa Kütüphanesi Ms. 560, 2b

Bidlisi also sought to present the new sultan with literary gifts upon his arrival at Selim's court in Edirne. In addition to *On Avoiding Places of Plague*, Bidlisi also presented a new version of *The Eight Paradises* with a verse conclusion that described Selim's rise to power, which he began to write in Mecca shortly after receiving the news of Selim's accession.⁵² This new version of Bidlisi's history incorporated this conclusion with the introduction he had completed in Mecca and a number of other revisions he made to the first version of the work. Within a few months of his return, at least two presentation copies of this new version were prepared under Bidlisi's supervision and offered to the sultan (See Figure 5.2).⁵³

More generally, the heady expansionist environment suited well Bidlisi's appeal as an expert on "eastern matters" and helped facilitate the successful rehabilitation of his court career. Although Bidlisi's writings are largely silent on his role in advocating an Ottoman campaign against Shah Isma'il, Celalzade and 'Âşık Çelebi, both writing a few decades later, record the influential advisory role Bidlisi assumed within Selim's closest circle. Celalzade mentions Bidlisi and Halimi Çelebi, the sultan's tutor from his days as governor in Trabzon, as the two scholars whose opinion Selim sought as he contemplated a campaign against the Qizilbash.⁵⁴ Indeed, according to 'Âşık Çelebi, the basic dynamics of this intimate council prevailed throughout the upcoming Ottoman campaign. In addition to Halimi Çelebi and Bidlisi, 'Âşık Çelebi also included Selim's chancellor, Tacizade Ca'fer Çelebi, in the tight circle of advisers who regularly met with the sultan on campaign.⁵⁵

Selim's interest in seeking the scholars' advice stemmed, in part, from his concern for legitimating military action in Muslim domains. Bidlisi notes that Selim called two separate meetings to discuss the possibility of an eastern campaign. First, Selim called his military commanders and sought to enlist their support for the cause by explaining the political threat that the Qizilbash posed to Ottoman control of Anatolia.

⁵² Bidlīsī, *Hasht bihisht*, Nuruosmaniye 3209.

⁵³ Bidlisi signed one of these copies, Bidlīsī, *HB*, 636a. The colophon of the other copy (Hazine 1655) indicates that it was copied in 1513 on the basis of Nuruosmaniye 3209, TSMK Ms. Hazine 1655, 668b.

⁵⁴ Mustafa Çelebi Celâlzade, *Selim-nâme*, eds. Ahmet Uğur and Mustafa Çuhadar (Istanbul: Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı, 1997), 12728.

⁵⁵ 'Âşık Çelebi, *Meşâ'irü'ş-Şu'arâ*, 1:453.

Subsequently, Selim met with scholars and clerics to request their sanctioning of a campaign against the Qizilbash.⁵⁶

This solicitation of a religious opinion to substantiate royal policy constituted a distinct tradition of Ottoman rule, especially with respect to potentially controversial actions. As early as the middle of the fourteenth century, Ottoman sultans sought formal religious opinions (*fatwa/fatawa*) prior to launching campaigns against other Muslim rulers.⁵⁷ The tradition was clearly established by the reign of Murad II one century later when he obtained five formal religious opinions – formulated by prominent Egyptian scholars from each of the four principal Sunni juridical traditions – to initiate hostilities against İbrahim Beğ, the lord of Karaman.⁵⁸ Two decades later, when Sultan Mehmed II sought to abrogate a peace treaty offered by his grand vizier, Mahmud Pasha, to the Bosnian king, he sought and obtained an opinion that sanctioned disregarding formal agreements with unbelievers.⁵⁹ The obvious political ends to which these opinions were put discomfited a number of scholars during Mehmed II and Bayezid II's reigns, yet their importance as ideological tools capable of shaping wider opinion at home and abroad rendered their use vital to Ottoman sultans, especially during periods when they sought to initiate hostilities against other Muslim rulers.⁶⁰

⁵⁶ Bidlîsî, *Salîmshâhnâme*, TSMK, Emanet Hazinesi 1423, 73a. İdrîs Bitlîsî, *İdrîs-i Bidlîsî Selim Şah-nâme*, trans. Hicabi Kırlangıç (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı, 2001), 122.

⁵⁷ Neşri, *Cihânnümâ*, 88.

⁵⁸ The religious opinions were written by some of the most prominent scholars of the fifteenth century, namely the Shafi'i scholar Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani (d. 1448), the Hanafi scholars Sa'd al-Din al-Dayri (867/1462) and 'Abd al-Salam al-Baghdadi, the Maliki scholar Badr al-Din Muhammad al-Tunisi (d. 1449), and the Hanbali scholar Badr al-Din Muhammad al-Baghdadi (d. 1453), TSMA E. 6467; İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, "Karamanoğulları Devri Vesikalarından İbrahim Beyin Karaman İmareti Vakfiyesi," *Belle-ten* 1 (1937): 57–143; Ramazan Boyacıoğlu, "Osmanoğullarının Karamanoğlu İbrahim Bey aleyine aldığı Fervalar," in *Pax Ottomana: Studies in Memoriam, Prof. Dr. Nejat Göyünç*, ed. Kemal Çiçek (Ankara: Sota; Yeni Türkiye, 2001), 641–57; for analysis of this document, see Christopher Markiewicz, "Secretaries and the Persian Cosmopolis in the Making of an Anti-Safavid Diplomatic Discourse," in *Diplomatic Culture at the Ottoman Court* (c. 1500–1600), eds. Tracey Sowerby and Christopher Markiewicz and (forthcoming).

⁵⁹ Theoharis Stavrides, *The Sultan of Viziers: The Life and Times of the Ottoman Grand Vizir Mahmud Pasha Angelovic (1453–1474)* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 149.

⁶⁰ On scholars' reluctance to rubber stamp policy, see R. C. Repp's translation of a letter by Molla Gurani to Bayezid II, in which the scholar recounts his refusal to issue religious opinions for the benefit of Mehmed II's last grand vizier, Karamani Mehmed Pasha (Repp, *The Müfti of Istanbul*, 144–146). For the original letter, see TSMA E. 5429.

For this reason, Selim called a second meeting in Istanbul in which he asked the scholars and clerics associated with the court for a religious opinion sanctioning a campaign against Shah Isma‘il.⁶¹ The consensus that emerged from this discussion was drawn up by a scholar named Nureddin Hamza Efendi – known as Sarıgörez – and laid out a line of reasoning that called for the eradication of Isma‘il’s supporters due to the threat they posed to the entire community of Muslims.⁶² Specifically, the document cited reports of Qizilbash offenses to the faith and depredations against learned and pious people, and concluded that the Qizilbash and any who were inclined to their cause were unbelievers (*kafirler*) and apostates (*mülhidler*) whose killing was licit.⁶³ The opinion went further and argued that the Qizilbash threat was more serious and despicable (*eşedd ve ekbah*) than that of normal unbelievers.⁶⁴ This last point, which stressed the importance of confronting the Qizilbash above waging war against unbelievers, became the major principle that the Ottomans touted to justify prioritizing a campaign against Isma‘il. Notwithstanding Bidlisi’s friendly communications with Shah Isma‘il’s court as late as 1513, Bidlisi reiterated this point in his subsequent narration of the scholars’ meeting: “The destruction of this iniquitous faction and the eradication of this group of shameless apostates is more important for this powerful sultan than war with the unbelievers and struggling against the Franks and Tatars.”⁶⁵ Essentially, this principle constituted a basic reworking of the frequently cited *casus belli* for Ottoman sultans in their conflicts with other Muslim rulers. In previous conflicts, scholars argued that iniquity visited upon Muslims within the domains of Islam took precedence over the expansion of those domains.⁶⁶ The new opinion followed from this basic principle but went one step further by characterizing Selim’s enemies

⁶¹ On these two meetings in Edirne and Constantinople, see Rıza Yıldırım, “Turkomans Between Two Empires,” 510–48.

⁶² TSMA E. 6401; M. C. Şehabeddin Tekindağ, “Yeni Kaynak ve Vesikaların Işığında Yavuz Sultan Selim’in İran Seferi,” *Tarih Dergisi* 22 (1967): 49–78; Abdurrahman Atçıl, “The Safavid Threat and Juristic Authority in the Ottoman Empire during the 16th Century,” *IJMES* 49 (2017): 295–314.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 55.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ Bidlîsî, *Salûmshâhnâme*, 73b.

⁶⁶ Neşri records an adage purportedly enunciated by scholars during the reign of Murad I: “war against the unbelievers except in cases of a general levy is only incumbent upon the community as a whole. However, thwarting iniquities upon believers is incumbent upon every Muslim (*Küffara gazâ nefîr-i âmm olmasa farz-ı kifayedür, ammâ mü’minlerden mezâlimi def’ etmek farz-ı ayındur*)” (Neşri, *Cihânnümâ*, 88).

as apostates and unbelievers. The campaign to establish a potent ideological platform for war against Isma‘il was also wide-ranging. Around this time, the Ottoman jurist Kemalpaşazade penned two treatises on heresy and apostasy that were clearly aimed at addressing the Qizilbash threat, yet did not go so far as Sarıgörez’s opinion.⁶⁷ In addition to the scholars in Ottoman lands who issued condemnatory opinions, there is some evidence to suggest that the Ottomans sought and obtained similar religious opinions from “foreign” scholars living abroad. For instance, in a letter written after the Ottoman conquest of Egypt in 1517 and addressed to a prominent Persian émigré at Selim’s court named Hakim Shah Muhammad Qazvini, the former Aqqyunlu secretary Fazlullah Khunji-Isfahani referred to his own religious opinion on the question of war against the Qizilbash:

Because my religious opinion [contained] in an ode, which was sent in the company of Mawlana Khwaja, is rationally argued, the struggle against the unbelievers of the red sect [i.e., Qizilbash] is more virtuous than the struggle against the Frankish, Georgian, and Russian unbelievers, because they (the Qizilbash) have appeared in the midst of Muslim domains. Furthermore, the scholars of Transoxiana, Khurasan, Rum, Egypt, and the Hijaz are in agreement with me on this religious opinion.⁶⁸

This intellectual support for the Ottoman campaign was clearly appreciated in Ottoman ruling circles. Indeed, Bidlisi was certainly aware of the value of broad support from “foreign” scholars, for he included portions of Khunji-Isfahani’s panegyric poem (*qasida*) in his work on Selim’s reign and prefaced its inclusion by remarking that “a number of petitions from the scholars, dervishes, and aggrieved people of Iran arrived at the gate of justice’s refuge, the sultan of Solomonian stature, requesting the elimination of the evil of those merciless tyrants.”⁶⁹ The perception that the Ottomans acted at the request of and in concert with scholars throughout Islamic domains constituted an important point of propaganda during the various eastern campaigns Selim launched between 1514 and 1517. In fact, these efforts to co-opt the indigenous scholarly classes of the lands that they conquered remained an essential feature of the Ottoman eastern strategy during this period. In this respect, Bidlisi offered an important potential service to Selim. His political, scholarly, and personal connections in

⁶⁷ Atçıl, “The Safavid Threat and Juristic Authority,” 301–4.

⁶⁸ TSMA E. 8334.

⁶⁹ Bidlîsî, *Salîmshâhnâme*, 74b. Bitlîsî, *İdrîs-i Bitlîsî Selîmshâhnâme*, 125.

Diyarbakr and Azerbaijan could be marshaled to persuade military commanders and local notables to join the Ottoman cause against Isma'il. Indeed, over the course of the following eighteen months, Bidlisi's efforts were dedicated primarily to recruiting and organizing opposition to Isma'il across his homeland.

Selim's efforts to rally support for a campaign against Isma'il gathered steam in the early months of 1514, and on March 19, 1514, the Ottoman army left Edirne to head east. The campaign marked the third time in as many generations that the Ottoman Sultanate came into direct conflict with one of its major eastern neighbors.⁷⁰ The ensuing campaign resulted in a great confrontation between Ottoman and Qizilbash forces at Chaldiran on August 23, 1514 in Azerbaijan and initiated a process of Ottoman eastern expansion that continued throughout Selim's reign.

The battle was a resounding success for the Ottoman forces. By the end of the daylong engagement, Shah Isma'il and all of his forces were in complete flight. The shah's camp and many distinguished members of his court had fallen into Ottoman hands.⁷¹ In the days following the battle, the Ottoman camp made plans to capture Isma'il and the escaped Qizilbash both by sending troops in pursuit and by establishing contacts with military commanders in western Iran who would be predisposed to the Ottoman cause.⁷² Efforts to reach out to local power brokers were in fact wide-ranging. In particular, Isma'il's lieutenants had dispossessed many of the Kurdish lords of Diyarbakr and Azerbaijan in the years immediately preceding Chaldiran. The advent of Ottoman forces in Azerbaijan upended the administrative arrangements Isma'il had established and offered the Kurdish lords the opportunity to reestablish autonomous rule over their ancestral lands.⁷³ As a scholar and statesman with considerable connections to many of the military commanders and notables, Bidlisi

⁷⁰ In 1473, Mehmed II defeated the Aqquyunlu ruler Uzun Hasan at the Battle of Başkent/Otlukbeli. For details of this campaign, see Woods, *The Aqquyunlu*, 116–23; between 1485 and 1491, Bayezid II waged a protracted war against the Mamluks that ended largely in a stalemate. For details on this conflict, see Har-El, *Struggle for Domination in the Middle East*.

⁷¹ For a detailed description and analysis of the battle, see Emecen, *Yavuz Sultan Selim*, 118–45.

⁷² See, for example, the Ottoman decree to Rustam Beg, the ruler of Luristan. Ferīdūn Beğ, *Münşe'ātü's-selāṭīn*, 1:392.

⁷³ On Isma'il and the Kurdish lords, see Martin van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State: On the Social and Political Organization of Kurdistan* (Utrecht: Rijksuniversiteit, 1978), 140–41.

offered Selim the possibility of an influential voice as the Ottomans sought to rally support for their struggle against the Qizilbash.

The outcome of Chaldiran also encouraged Ottoman efforts to seize and annex Tabriz, the seat of political power in western Iran since the Ilkhanids in the late thirteenth century. In the days following the battle, the Ottoman army advanced as far as Khuy, where it halted and planned its onward advance to Tabriz.⁷⁴ On August 29, 1514, Selim ordered his grand vizier Dukakinzade Ahmed Pasha, the Rumelian finance director Piri Pasha, and a ranking janissary officer along with 500 men to proceed in advance of the army to Tabriz and secure the city from the threat posed by the fleeing Qizilbash.⁷⁵ In addition to these men, Selim ordered Bidlisi to join this advance party and help secure the city.⁷⁶

The mission of the advance party consisted of securing the city and appropriating the shah's treasury. One of the primary concerns of the Ottoman leadership was that the fleeing Qizilbash troops would pillage Tabriz before the arrival of the Ottoman army.⁷⁷ This threat undermined the Ottoman policy of portraying their campaign as a righteous cause that would benefit the community of Muslims in Azerbaijan. For this reason, Selim's decision to dispatch his grand vizier along with 500 household troops signaled a clear commitment to preserve law and order within Tabriz during this delicate period of political uncertainty. Similarly, the desire to secure and appraise Shah Isma'il's valuables and treasury informed Selim's appointment of the most senior financial officer of the sultanate, Piri Pasha. In fact, appointing finance officers to help secure unprotected cities became the *modus operandi* during Selim's reign. In addition to this mission, Selim appointed similar advance parties to secure Aleppo, Damascus, and Cairo in the wake of Ottoman victories over the Mamluks in 1516 and 1517.⁷⁸ Bidlisi participated in the mission in order

⁷⁴ Bidlisi mentions that in the days following the battle the army advanced as far as Khuy, where Selim ordered an advance party to hasten to Tabriz, Bidlisi. *Salīmshāhnāma*, 103b; İdris Bitlisi, *İdris-i Bidlisi Selim Şah-nāme*, trans. Hicabi Kırlangıç (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı, 2001), 195.

⁷⁵ Haydar Çelebi, "Rūznāme," in *Münşe'ātü's-selātin* (Istanbul: Dāru'ṭ-ṭibā'ati'l-'āmiri, 1274), 1:463.

⁷⁶ Bidlisi, *Salīmshāhnāma*, 133a.

⁷⁷ Bidlisi, *Salīmshāhnāma*, 103b.

⁷⁸ Days after the Ottoman victories at Marj Dabiq and Raydaniya, Selim appointed men to secure the treasuries and citadels of Aleppo and Cairo (Haydar Çelebi, "Rūznāme," 1:480, 485). Shortly after Selim's departure from Aleppo on September 15, 1516, he appointed an advance party led by the vizier Yunus Pasha, the Anadolu finance officer Mehmed Çelebi, and the former Mamluk governor of Aleppo, Kha'ir Beg, to proceed on to

to secure the support of Tabriz's urban notables for the Ottoman cause. Their arrival in Tabriz on the eve of Friday prayer services was particularly fortuitous, as the advance party was able to secure the city and ensure that the Friday sermon was offered in Selim's name.⁷⁹ Moreover, the arrival before Friday prayers offered Bidlisi the opportunity to address the populace of Tabriz in the Nasriya mosque. As Bidlisi later recounted, the chance to address the entire congregation of Tabriz was particularly significant, as it permitted him to explain to the congregation the sultan's royal attributes (*alqab-i sultan*), and, in this manner, help project the ideals of Ottoman sovereignty upon the new population.⁸⁰

In addition to his own oratory, Bidlisi was equipped with two decrees from Sultan Selim addressed to the notables of Tabriz, especially the judge of the city, Shams al-Din Ahmad, and Shah Isma'il's minister of religious affairs, Amir 'Abd al-Vahhab.⁸¹ Bidlisi likely knew both of these men from his decades of residence in Tabriz. Certainly, he knew Amir 'Abd al-Vahhab. As a high-ranking religious official in Tabriz and an early skeptic of Shah Isma'il's political career, Amir 'Abd al-Vahhab and other notables like him offered Bidlisi the best chance to persuade the populace of the Ottomans' just and righteous intentions. The letters informed the city of Selim's approach and ordered the populace to accept Ottoman rule.⁸² The letters and Bidlisi's overtures were successful, at least in the short term; the advance party secured the city and awaited the arrival of the sultan without major incident.⁸³

Selim's arrival and the Ottoman army's residence in and around Tabriz was marked by the traditional Islamic signs of sovereignty. Foremost among these signs were the inclusion of the sovereign's name in the Friday sermon (*khutba*) and the issuance of coin currency under the authority of the sovereign (*sikka*). More generally, Selim also endeavored

Damascus. Like the Tabriz advance party, this party consisted of military commanders and financial officers, as well as a prominent notable with ties to the newly conquered area. Similarly, the advance party was charged with securing the city and its treasury (Kabir 'Abd al-Laṭīf Qāzizāda, *Ghazavāt-i Salīm Khān*, Hacı Selim Ağa 825, 86a–7a).

⁷⁹ Bidlisi states that they arrived in the city on the night of Jum'a (Friday), Bidlisi, *Salīmshāhnāma*, 103b. As the days of the week in the Islamic calendar begin at sundown, the advance party arrived on Thursday, August 31, 1520, two days after Selim ordered the advance party to depart for Tabriz, according to Ḥaydar Çelebi (Ḥaydar Çelebi, "Rūznāme," 1:463).

⁸⁰ Bidlisi, *Salīmshāhnāma*, 104b.

⁸¹ Ferīdūn Beğ, *Münşe'ātü's-selāṭīn*, 1:390–91.

⁸² Ferīdūn Beğ, *Münşe'ātü's-selāṭīn*, 1:390–91.

⁸³ Bidlisi, *Salīmshāhnāma*, 104a.

to demonstrate his authority as ruler through the administration of justice in Tabriz. Several of the Ottoman contemporary accounts emphasize the time that the sultan spent hearing petitions and issuing rulings for the benefit of the general populace from his camp outside the city walls at Surkh Ab.⁸⁴ These efforts, in particular, were clearly intended to impress favorably the local populace, but they also demonstrated Ottoman claims to sovereign rule over Tabriz, and by extension, Azerbaijan.

Despite displaying these signs of sovereignty, the conquest of Azerbaijan could not be realized fully without a prolonged commitment to eliminating Shah Isma'il's continuing political threat to the region. Even so, pursuing Isma'il in the waning weeks of summer proved unrealistic, especially as the Ottoman army was recovering from the demands of a long march across Anatolia followed by the major battle at Chaldiran. Consequently, the Ottoman leadership contemplated the benefits of resting in Tabriz for the winter before pursuing the Qizilbash in the following spring. The debate on this question consumed the energies of the leadership for most of its time in Tabriz. The sultan, Bidlisi, and a handful of advisers, favored remaining in Tabriz, while the vast majority of the military commanders and the rank and file of the army opposed them in favor of returning to Istanbul.⁸⁵ Most of the contemporary Ottoman sources emphasize the opposition's concern for the lack of suitable supplies for the army around Tabriz in their arguments for a return to Istanbul.⁸⁶ Even so, the opposition was likely also motivated by the pronounced desire on the part of the household regiments, especially the janissaries, to return to their homes in Istanbul and Galata.⁸⁷ In fact, Selim's ultimate decision to winter in Amasya, and not Istanbul, may have contributed to the janissary disturbances that plagued the Ottoman winter camp in February 1515 and informed his decision to return to Istanbul after a short spring campaign in 1515.⁸⁸ On September 12, 1514, just five

⁸⁴ Keşfi notes that Selim dispensed justice and gifts upon the populace at Surkh-Ab (Keşfi, *Bāğ-i firdevs-i guzāt*, Ms. Esad Efendi 2147, 48b); one such ruling was subsequently included in Feridun Beg's collection of official documents; see Feridun Beg, *Münşe'-ātü's-selāṭin*, 1:391–92.

⁸⁵ Bidlīsī, *Salīmshāhnāma*, 107b; İdrīs Bitlīsī, *İdrīs-i Bidlīsī Selim Şah-nāme*, 205.

⁸⁶ Keşfi, *Bāğ-i firdevs-i guzāt*, 52a; Sücüdī, *Tarih-i Sultān Selim Hān*, TSMK Ms. Revan 1284, 25a; Bidlīsī, *Salīmshāhnāma*, 105b–106a.

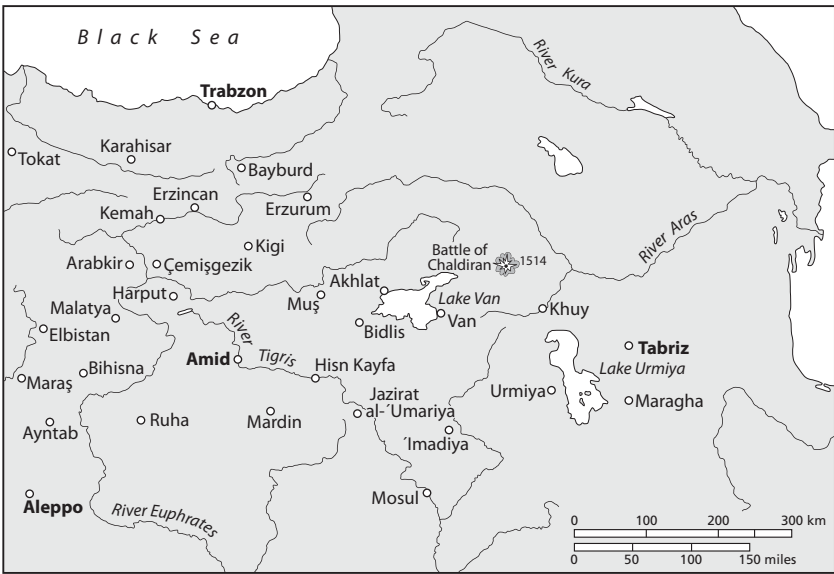
⁸⁷ Keşfi states explicitly that the troops desired to return to their homes in Galata and Istanbul and petitioned the leading statesmen to bring the matter before Selim (Keşfi, *Bāğ-i firdevs-i guzāt*, 51b–52a).

⁸⁸ Emecen, *Yavuz Sultan Selim*, 154–56.

days after the army's arrival in Tabriz, Selim ordered the army to prepare to evacuate the city and return west.

MISSION TO KURDISTAN

Although the Ottoman army was destined for winter quarters in Amasya, Bidlisi was charged with a mission in the opposite direction.⁸⁹ Over the course of the following eighteen months, Bidlisi traveled between Tabriz and Amid and met with Kurdish military commanders and local notables to negotiate an alliance with the Ottoman Sultanate for the conquest of Diyarbakr. Although marked by considerable hardship, the mission, in some ways, marked the pinnacle of his professional career; his activities between September 1514 and May 1516 uniquely contributed to the Ottoman conquest of the region.



MAP 3.1 Kurdistan and neighboring regions

⁸⁹ Bidlisi specifies that he departed the Ottoman camp shortly after its departure from Tabriz (Bidlisi, *Salimshāhnāma*, 119b).

Bidlisi's mission evolved considerably over the following eighteen months. Initially, he was charged with distributing the sultan's decrees and honors to Kurdish military commanders and gathering intelligence on developments within Iran.⁹⁰ The positive reception of Bidlisi's overtures motivated Selim to appoint Bidlisi as an informal leader over these new subjects through a decree issued in March 1515.⁹¹ Under the new order, Bidlisi acted as attaché to the Kurdish units, who were ordered to act in concert with Ottoman troops to realize the conquest of Diyarbakr. Despite several setbacks along the way, the arrangement ultimately succeeded, for in September 1515, Amid, the former Aqqyunlu capital and largest city in the region, was in Ottoman hands and the remnants of the Qizilbash who had been besieging the city were in full retreat.⁹² Once again, as a consequence of these developments, Bidlisi's role evolved. Upon receiving the news of the conquest of Amid, Selim issued blank titles of investiture to Bidlisi and the Ottoman commander in Diyarbakr, Bıyıklı Mehmed Pasha, and asked the two leaders to appoint appropriate and worthy men to the districts that had been delineated by the sultan and his finance director in Istanbul.⁹³ This distribution of lands established the basic outlines for the Ottoman administration of Diyarbakr in the sixteenth century.⁹⁴

The conquest of Diyarbakr was significant. In a matter of eighteen months, the Ottoman forces, with the cooperation of the Kurdish lords, had greatly expanded Ottoman domains east of the Euphrates. For the first time in its history, the Ottoman Sultanate governed lands, for which

⁹⁰ In a report to Selim composed around March 1515, Bidlisi reiterates his objectives: to travel among the Kurds and distribute honors (*tashrifat*), deliver orders (*ahkam*), and report on developments to the court, TSMA E. 8333/2. My dating of this document differs from Vural Genç's view that the letter is from the middle of 1516. Genç surmises that Bidlisi's request for a response to his previous reports is a reference to other extant letters of Bidlisi. Even so, since this letter, unlike Bidlisi's later letters, makes no reference to the political and military developments of the latter months of 1515 and specifically references developments the winter of 1514–15, a dating of early spring 1515 seems more likely. Bidlisi's reference to other correspondence may be to no longer extant letters (Vural Genç, "İdris-i Bidlîsî'nin II. Bayezid ve I. Selim'e Mektupları," 154).

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Bidlisi, *Salîmshâhnâme*, 133a.

⁹³ In a report that he sent to Selim shortly before the city's conquest in September 1515, Bidlisi suggests the need to reward leaders of the Ottoman-Kurdish coalition who were sent to relieve the populace of Amid, TSMA E. 1019. On the division of the conquered province, see Çelebi, "Rûznâme," 1:471.

⁹⁴ For a detailed reconstruction of Bidlisi's activities primarily on the basis of Bidlisi's reports to Selim preserved in the archives of the Topkapı Palace, see Markiewicz, "The Crisis of Rule," 211–25.

Islamic cultural and administrative heritage extended temporally to the first Arab conquests of the seventh and eighth centuries. While all Ottoman conquests, whether of Christian populations in the Balkans or Turkmen rulers in Anatolia, involved recognition and co-optation of local elites through the extension of privileges and the confirmation of rank, the conquests of Diyarbakr, as well as Syria and Egypt in the coming years, necessitated a more pronounced accommodation of the local Muslim notables. After all, in many cases these notables had enjoyed privileges under successive dynasties for centuries. Ottoman claims to conquer for the sake of justice for the Muslim community could only be fully substantiated through the confirmation of the time-honored rights of this community's leaders. Moreover, both the local military and learned elites had important contributions to make to the new Ottoman administration of these lands. Ottoman governance in Diyarbakr, Syria, and Egypt was fraught with a number of military and political challenges throughout the 1510s and 1520s. In many cases, the Ottoman solution to these challenges relied on the assistance of the local elites who had been recruited to the Ottoman cause in the earliest days following the conquest of these territories.

According to Haydar Çelebi, the chief secretary of the Ottoman royal council during Selim's reign, the Ottoman sultan and his court in Istanbul greeted the news of the relief of Amid with considerable activity. On November 4, 1515, the day after a messenger arrived with this news, Selim divided the newly constituted province of Diyarbakr into twenty-three districts (*sancak*) and appointed Bıyıklı Mehmed the supreme commander (*beğlerbeği*) of the province with a right to 1.5 million Ottoman silver aspers in tax revenue from the district of Amid. On November 9, 1515, Selim bestowed upon Bidlisi a gift of 2,000 florins and promoted Küçük Ahmed, the bearer of the good tidings, to the rank of district commander (*sancak beği*) in Harput (Elazığ, Turkey), one of the newly formed administrative districts in Diyarbakr.⁹⁵ Küçük Ahmed waited in Istanbul for eleven more days, during which time the chancery drew up the titles of investiture for the newly appointed district commanders of Diyarbakr. On November 18, as Küçük Ahmed was about to return to Diyarbakr with the titles of investiture in hand, Selim altered his decision and recalled the messenger. Selim took the orders from Küçük Ahmed, invited the chancellor and the chief secretary to the council, and ordered

⁹⁵ Barkan, "H. 933-934 (M. 1527-1528) Mali Yılına âit bir bütçe örneği," 306.

both of them to prepare thirty new documents consisting of twenty-three titles of investiture (*berat*) and seven treaties (*istimaletname*) with Kurdish lords that confirmed their preexisting rights within their ancestral lands. In contrast to the previously prepared documents, the particular beneficiaries of these new titles of investiture were to remain unspecified. In the order to Bidlisi that accompanied these documents, the sultan instructed his adviser to collaborate with Bıyıklı Mehmed and to appoint worthy men as district commanders and prepare for them titles of investiture in the style befitting their status.⁹⁶ Similarly, Bidlisi and Bıyıklı Mehmed were to proceed along similar lines in recognizing the preexisting rights of the Kurdish lords.⁹⁷

The order gave the two men extensive authority to establish the basic contours of Ottoman administration in Diyarbakr. The establishment of these relations with the Kurdish lords followed a similar pattern to the relationships that the Ottomans established with Christian temporal and religious authorities in the Balkans as they exerted authority in south-eastern Europe during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Frequently, the Ottomans successfully co-opted the military and religious elites of these newly conquered areas through the recognition of preconquest privileges and the bestowal of hereditary prebends (*timar*) that both acknowledged ancestral property claims and initiated a modicum of integration with the new Ottoman administrative order, such as it existed.⁹⁸ This approach had the advantage of demonstrating an acceptance of a leader's preexisting status within his own domain, even as it eroded gradually the leader's independence by establishing a fixed and formal relationship with the Ottoman sultan. The matter that Selim left to Bidlisi and Bıyıklı Mehmed was therefore significant. The two men were instructed to determine which Kurdish leaders were worthy of a formal recognition of status, what rights and privileges should be recognized, and where these rights and privileges should exist.

The two statesmen divided the province into two types of administrative units that corresponded to the two types of documents they were tasked with formulating and distributing. Those areas that had been

⁹⁶ Bidlīsī, *Salīmshāhnāma*, 140b.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Halil İnalçık, "Ottoman Methods of Conquest," *Studia Islamica* 2 (1954), 115–16; İnalçık, "The Status of the Greek Orthodox Patriarch under the Ottomans," *Turcica* 21–3 (1991), 409; Tom Papademetriou, *Render unto the Sultan: Power, Authority, and the Greek Orthodox Church in the Early Ottoman Centuries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 76, 86–89.

governed traditionally by Kurdish lords were granted a high degree of autonomy, while the rest of the province – mainly to the west and north of Amid – was divided into traditional districts and included in the Ottoman land surveys conducted during the final years of Selim's reign. In the central and western areas of Diyarbakr, the Ottomans would exert more or less direct administrative control through the appointment of district commanders (*sancak beği*) who, in most cases, were appointed to these positions from within the Ottoman military class. According to an Ottoman cadastral survey completed in 1518, the Ottomans established regular districts in Amid, Mardin, 'Arabgir, Kighi (Kiği), Harput, Ergani, Siverek, Ruha, Akçakale, Çermik, Sincar, and Çemişgezek.⁹⁹ Among these locales, only Çemişgezek was the ancestral seat of a Kurdish lord who directly assisted the Ottomans in the campaign to relieve Amid. As Selim's order to Bidlisi stipulated, Bıyıklı Mehmed and Bidlisi bestowed these districts upon worthy men within the Ottoman ranks. Moreover, the order instructed Bidlisi that "copies of the titles, which are individually written, and the value of the corresponding usufruct grants should be recorded in a register and sent to my Sublime Port so that it may be preserved here and its particulars be known and understood."¹⁰⁰

In places farther east, Bıyıklı Mehmed and Bidlisi generally recognized the status and independence of the Kurdish lords. These areas corresponded with the territories of the most powerful Kurdish lords who joined the Ottoman Diyarbakr campaign in 1515. While there is no record of which lords received one of the seven treaties that Selim sent to Bidlisi, in all likelihood, these special arrangements accrued to the benefit of the most powerful Kurdish lords in Bidlis, 'Imadiya, Hisn Kayfa, Jazira-yi 'Umariya, Hizan, Hakkari, and Sasun. As with the appointment of district commanders, the order to Bidlisi left to his discretion the task of identifying the particular recipients of these special treaties:

Aside from the titles of investiture, blank papers with the sultanic seal were sent for the lords who require special treaties (*istimaletname*). Each of these should be composed in whatever manner is appropriate for the dispatch of a special treaty and be sent along with the gifts. You should register, along with the copies of the titles of investiture, in what manner the special treaties and gifts were administered and send [this register] to my court.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ BOA TT. D. 64.

¹⁰⁰ Bidlisi, *Salımshāhnāma*, 140b.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

In the years that followed this bestowal of autonomy, the Ottomans extended privileges to a larger number of Kurdish lords and formalized their semi-autonomous status. According to an Ottoman register prepared in 1517, the number of Kurdish commanders affiliated with the Ottoman Sultanate included, along with the rulers of Bidlis, Hizan, Hisn Kayfa, Jazira-yi 'Umariya, and Sasun, twenty-two other Kurdish lords.¹⁰² A decade later, in 1527, Süleyman confirmed the status of these Kurdish lords through the issuance of an edict that specified their privileges, including the right to hereditary succession. Except in instances when a Kurdish lord failed to report for a military campaign, the Ottomans had no authority to interfere in the governance of these territories.¹⁰³

Even within areas of the province directly administered by Selim's appointed district commanders, the Ottomans confirmed the rights and status of the preexisting local military elites. In the first cadastral survey of Amid completed in 1518, the new Ottoman administration was careful to acknowledge the privileged place of important Aqqyunlu chieftains. The register confirmed the special status of at least two Aqqyunlu notables through their appointment to sizable usufruct grants (*ze'amet*).¹⁰⁴ Similarly, one of the lesser Kurdish chieftains in Amid was installed in his ancestral lands.¹⁰⁵ For the Kurdish nomadic tribes within the district, the Ottoman compilers of the register examined and confirmed the service and tax stipulations that they had been granted previously by the Aqqyunlu ruler Uzun Hasan.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰² TSMA D. 9772. Ömer Lütfi Barkan suggested that the register was created in the early part of Süleyman's reign (Barkan, "H. 933–934 [M. 1527–1528] Mali Yılına âit bir bütçe örneği"); more recently, Enver Çakar has shown that the register has a *terminus post quem* of April 1517 and a *terminus ante quem* of December 1517, on the basis of known appointment dates and death dates of men mentioned in the register (Enver Çakar, "XVI. Yüzyılda Şam Beylerbeyliğinin idarî taksimatı," *Fırat Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 13, 1 [2003]: 357, n.49).

¹⁰³ For further discussion of these two documents as they relate to the Kurdish lords, see Martin van Bruinessen, "The Ottoman Conquest of Diyarbekir and the Administrative Organization of the Province in the 16th and 17th Centuries," in *Evlıya Çelebi in Diyarbekir: The Relevant Section of The Seyahatname*, eds. Martin van Bruinessen and Boeschoten (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1988), 13–28.

¹⁰⁴ The notables in question were Ughlan Khalil, a member of the Bayandur clan, who received a *ze'amet* of 25,000 Ottoman *akçes*; and Farrukhshad Beg ibn Sulayman Beg, the son of a leading Turkmen clan leader in the reign of Sultan Ya'qub, who received a *ze'amat* valued at 40,500 Ottoman *akçes* (M. Mehdi İlhan, *Amid [Diyarbakır]: 1518 Detailed Register* [Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 2000], 439, 593).

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 576.

¹⁰⁶ See, for example, the arrangement agreed upon for the the Bujiyan tribe (p. 153) and the Basiyan tribe (p. 172), *ibid.*, 153, 172.

BIDLISI AND THE OTTOMAN CONQUEST OF MAMLUK
SYRIA AND EGYPT

Bidlisi's role in the incorporation of Diyarbakr within Ottoman domains constituted his greatest and most lasting accomplishment of statecraft in his long and varied career. The mission garnered for him generous gifts from the sultan – although such gifts paled in comparison with Bıyıklı Mehmed's rewards – and reunited him with the royal camp, where he again assumed a role as trusted adviser to Selim during the Ottoman campaigns against the Mamluks in Syria and Egypt. Despite this apparent renown and place of honor in the sultan's immediate company, during his eight months with Selim in Mamluk lands, Bidlisi gradually became frustrated with his inability to guide the sultan toward what he viewed as a prudent military strategy and a just administrative policy. As in the past, his repeated and vociferous assertions of his own views undermined his relations with Selim's other top statesmen to the point that the sultan's continued collaboration with Bidlisi became untenable. The situation deteriorated to the extent that Selim ordered Bidlisi to return to Istanbul separately from the royal camp in July 1517.¹⁰⁷ This exile would be Bidlisi's last. In the final three years of his life, he devoted himself to a new work of history that would both celebrate Selim's accomplishments and serve as an apologia, memoir, and legacy for its author.

When Bidlisi joined Selim's camp in November 1516, the Ottoman army had just reached Damascus after having defeated the main Mamluk army outside Aleppo on August 1516.¹⁰⁸ The immediate circumstances that led to an Ottoman confrontation with the Mamluks likely surprised Bidlisi as he resided in Diyarbakr in 1516. Indeed, in the winter before the Ottoman-Mamluk confrontation, Selim signaled every intention of directing the campaign of 1516 against Shah Isma'il in western Iran and not against the Mamluks. In November 1515, Selim ordered the Ottoman commander of Karaman with all of the cavalry of the province and one of the household cavalry regiments (*'ulufeciler*) to head to Diyarbakr to reinforce Bıyıklı Mehmed's troops.¹⁰⁹ Two months later, in late January 1516, he ordered the Anadolu provincial cavalry to assemble at Kırşehir

¹⁰⁷ Bidlisi returned to Istanbul with the Ottoman fleet. Haydar Çelebi notes that Selim gave his admiral, Ca'fer Ağa, permission to depart Alexandria on July 15, 1517 (Haydar Çelebi, "Rüznâme," 1:455).

¹⁰⁸ Bidlisi rejoined Selim's camp no later than November 20, 1516, as on that date Selim sought Bidlisi's counsel (ibid., 1:481).

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 472.

and the provincial cavalry of Rumiya to wait at Sivas.¹¹⁰ In May 1516, he ordered his grand vizier, Sinan Pasha, to proceed to Diyarbakr with the commanders of Rumelia, Anatolia, and Karaman, and 3,000 janissaries and other household troops.¹¹¹ When Selim departed from Istanbul on June 5, 1516, his aim seemed to be a campaign against Isma‘il’s forces in Diyarbakr and beyond.¹¹²

Yet shortly after the departure of the army from Istanbul, Selim’s priorities changed drastically. His direction of Ottoman forces to Diyarbakr in the previous winter and spring was likely intended to confront and decisively defeat Isma‘il’s commander in the province, Qara Khan Ustajlu, who, over the course of the preceding winter, had gathered a sizable force and was threatening Bıyıklı Mehmed’s position in Amid. During the spring and into the summer, Bıyıklı Mehmed launched a campaign against Qara Khan, which culminated in a decisive Qizilbash defeat near Koçhisar in May 1516. A messenger bearing this news of victory greeted the main Ottoman army under Sinan Pasha’s command as it entered Akşehir on May 22, 1516 before he continued on to Selim.¹¹³ Bıyıklı Mehmed’s victory likely altered Selim’s calculus. No longer would the entire Ottoman army be required for operations in Diyarbakr. Moreover, political developments in relation to the Mamluks began to alter Selim’s priorities. Throughout the spring and summer, Selim corresponded regularly with Qansawh al-Ghawri, who, in the spring of 1516, ordered the entire Mamluk army to advance north from Cairo to the environs of Aleppo.¹¹⁴ This Mamluk advance likely alarmed Selim, who feared that Qansawh al-Ghawri had entered into an alliance with Shah Isma‘il and would threaten the Ottoman rear in the event of a campaign in western Iran.¹¹⁵ By the late

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 474.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 476.

¹¹² For instance, Qazizada, who was traveling with the main Ottoman army at this time, notes that the army departed Istanbul on June 5, 1516. Shortly thereafter, while the army was still in Üsküdar, news arrived of the approach of the Mamluk army towards Aleppo. It is possible that Selim changed his plans around this time (Qāzizāda, *Ghazavāt-i Sulṭān Salīm*, Hacı Selim Ağa 825, 23b).

¹¹³ Haydar Çelebi, “Rūznāme,” 1:477.

¹¹⁴ On April 11, 1516, Selim received a report from Şehsüvaroğlu ‘Ali Beğ that Qansawh al-Ghawri planned to head to Aleppo (ibid., 1:476); the Mamluk sultan did not depart from Cairo until May 23, 1516 (Ibn Iyās, *Badā‘i’ al-zuhūr fī waqā‘i’ al-duhūr*, 5:42).

¹¹⁵ Bacqué-Grammont provides a thorough discussion of the background to Ottoman-Mamluk relations after the rise of Shah Isma‘il. He points to the late Ottoman departure from Istanbul in June 1516 as evidence of Selim’s intentions to campaign in Syria, where a winter in the field would not be as trying as one passed in Azerbaijan (Jean-Louis Bacqué-Grammont, *Les Ottomans, les Safavides et leurs voisins: contribution à l’histoire*

summer, Selim recalled the Ottoman army from its mission to Diyarbakr and ordered it to meet him near Elbistan.¹¹⁶ The order clearly signaled a change in strategic objectives and was followed shortly by a terse message to the Mamluk sultan that clearly signaled a coming Ottoman-Mamluk conflict.¹¹⁷

After meeting the Ottoman army, Selim advanced south and engaged the main Mamluk army outside Aleppo at Marj Dabiq on August 24, 1516.¹¹⁸ The decisive Ottoman victory, in which Qansawh al-Ghawri and a large number of Mamluk commanders were killed, opened Syria and Egypt to Ottoman conquest. In the months following this battle, Selim and the high Ottoman statesmen were fully consumed with the task of establishing a new course of action: how to consolidate Ottoman rule in Syria and whether to push on to Egypt or turn toward Isma'il in Iran. For even as the Ottomans worked to expel the remaining Mamluk forces and establish an administration in Syria and Egypt in 1516–17, the prospect of yet another campaign to finish off Shah Isma'il frequently loomed in deliberations of state. In all of these matters, Bidlisi offered his services as advisor to Selim.

Since his resounding success in Kurdistan, Bidlisi enjoyed the considerable trust and gratitude of Selim. Yet, as in the past, such recognition as Bidlisi received remained largely informal. He would remain a trusted adviser of Selim, but not, it seems, in an *ex officio* capacity. In his order addressed to Bidlisi in November 1515 regarding the division of Diyarbakr, Selim mentioned that he sent the scholar 2,000 florins, several fur cloaks, and a sword with a gold-plated sheath as gifts in excess of his normal stipend.¹¹⁹ While the bestowal of these luxurious gifts demonstrated the sultan's appreciation, there is no indication in the order that Bidlisi had been honored through the appointment to a formal post. In

des relations internationales dans l'orient islamique de 1514 à 1524 [Istanbul: Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut te Istanbul, 1987], 193–94). Of course, such considerations can be accounted for if Selim's primary objective, as suggested by the winter and spring troop movements, was Diyarbakr, a more geographically proximate and temperate province.

¹¹⁶ Selim met the rest of the army under Sinan Pasha's command near Elbistan on July 23, 1516 (Haydar Çelebi, "Rūznāme," 1:478).

¹¹⁷ Ferīdūn Beğ, *Münşe'ātü's-selātin*, 1:426–27.

¹¹⁸ Haydar Çelebi, "Rūznāme," 1:478–79.

¹¹⁹ Bidlīsī, *Salīmshāhnāma*, 140b. 2,000 florins was approximately 110,000 silver aspers in 1509, see Halil Sahillioğlu "Akçe," *DİA*. Haydar Çelebi also mentions the particular gifts bestowed upon Bidlisi in his entry for 13 Shawwal 921 (November 19, 1515) (Haydar Çelebi, "Rūznāme," 1:472).

contrast, at the same time that Bidlisi was awarded these gifts, Bıyıklı Mehmed, Bidlisi's primary Ottoman collaborator on this mission, was appointed as the Ottoman commander and governor of the province of Diyarbakr and given more than 1.5 million silver aspers.¹²⁰ The discrepancy between the rewards offered to Bidlisi and Bıyıklı Mehmed may be rooted in the separate professional backgrounds of the two men; as a scholar, the appointment of Bidlisi to a governorship was likely inappropriate. Even so, there is little evidence in the sources from Selim's reign that Bidlisi was appointed to any formal post in recognition of his service.¹²¹

Any doubt regarding Bidlisi's ex officio role in the Ottoman court must be set in relation to the considerable informal weight that his advice carried with Selim during the campaign in Syria and Egypt. In his own narrative account, Bidlisi mentions that he was recalled from Diyarbakr while Selim was residing in Damascus so that the sultan could benefit from his counsel.¹²² Over the course of the following weeks, Bidlisi was frequently in Selim's company, during which time he undoubtedly had many opportunities to influence Selim's plans for action. Indeed, Haydar Çelebi notes specifically that on November 20, 1516 "Selim called Sinan Pasha and Mawlana Bidlisi. He planned, and sought the advice of these two and they discussed the affairs of the eastern lands."¹²³ Two days later, the reports of Bidlisi and the Diyarbakr *timar defterdarı* (registrar of *timars*) were recorded for the benefit of the royal council.¹²⁴ Bidlisi's counsel and testimony on eastern lands likely offered a firsthand perspective on the political and military situation in western Iran as Selim considered his future course of action.

Although the Ottomans had defeated the main Mamluk army and occupied Aleppo and Damascus, in the late autumn of 1516, an Ottoman offensive into Egypt was by no means a foregone conclusion. In the weeks and months after Marj Dabiq, the remnants of the Mamluk army retreated to Damascus and subsequently Cairo. In the middle of October, Tumanbay

¹²⁰ Ibid., 1:471; archival records indicate an even greater sum. The value of his usufruct grants in Amid amounted to 1.2 million silver aspers, while his grants in the district of Mardin exceeded 1 million silver aspers. On Amid, see İlhan, Amid (Diyarbakır), 35; on Mardin, see Necat Göyünç, *XVI. yüzyılda Mardin Sancağı* (İstanbul: Edebiyat Fakültesi Basımevi, 1969), 151.

¹²¹ For a detailed discussion, see Markiewicz, "The Crisis of Rule," 235–39.

¹²² Bidlisi, *Salımshāhnāma*, 147a.

¹²³ Haydar Çelebi, "Rūznāme," 1:481.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

was installed as sultan in Cairo and began organizing a Mamluk defense of southern Syria outside of Gaza. During this period, the Ottoman camp debated its future course of action. In fact, it was not until December 2, 1516, almost two weeks after Selim's consultation with Bidlisi that the sultan decided to press on to Egypt.¹²⁵

Throughout these deliberations, Bidlisi advocated a return east and the conquest of Iran. In his history of Selim, Bidlisi emphasizes the many meetings of the sultan's trusted men and recalls in some detail one particular exchange that underscored his general views, even as he chose to express them in veiled rhetorical terms:

In the midst of the conversations of the servants of the sultan who were permitted to offer speeches and engage in debate, these elegant words were mentioned: 'In the words of the eloquent men around the world it became prevalent [to say] that the heavenly garden of the world is three parts: the Ghuta gardens of Damascus, the Sughd of Samarkand, and the Naw-Bab of Fars.' This audacious pitiful servant put forward the notion that if Isfahan were also counted among the levels of heaven, it would not be unjust. The wise Sultan attributed this remark to a love of one's country, an exaggeration of the laudable attributes of that land, and the desire to persuade the sultan to conquer Iran, which was always being mentioned by the expressive tongue of this most insignificant of servants, so he ordered me to expound on this speech and establish the evidence and proof [of its veracity].¹²⁶

Bidlisi's defense of his position emphasized the fact that many learned scholars hail from Isfahan and that the area possessed fine water – better than in Damascus – and lush gardens, but returned, before concluding his speech, to his hope that Selim conquer the region.¹²⁷ The inclusion of this anecdote immediately preceding his account of Selim's deliberations on the conquest of Egypt suggests that Bidlisi advocated for the conquest of Iran, even as the Ottoman army was immersed in a campaign in Syria. This unwavering call for an Ottoman conquest of Iran is also perceptible throughout his reports to Selim written a few years earlier. His continual push for Ottoman involvement in Iran likely emanated from his personal attachment to his homeland and what he judged as the deplorable condition into which it had fallen over the preceding twenty years. In the Ottoman dynasty, the justice and fair administration of which he extolled throughout his historical writings, Bidlisi recognized an idealized order, which, if applied to his homeland in Iran, had the potential to set right the

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Bidlisi, *Salimshāhnāma*, 158a.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

decades of misrule during the last years of the Aqqyunlu regime and the reign of Shah Ismaʿil. In such a context, the ideological positions developed and deployed in the Aqqyunlu court of the 1480s and 1490s might resonate among the local notables from the scholarly classes of these newly conquered provinces, classes, which, like the Aqqyunlu, the Ottomans were keen to recruit. Even so, as we saw in Chapter 1 with respect to the Aqqyunlu, any ideological expressions of Ottoman rule necessarily would need to be matched in policies.

On an ideological level, such notables appeared receptive to the arrival of the Ottomans. Indeed, since the beginning of his reign, Selim had been associated with Timur's most widely used title, *sahib-qiran*. Now, as his deeds seemed to assume greater cosmic significance, the chorus of panegyrists and well-wishers swelled. Segments of the local scholarly community in Damascus began casting Selim and his deeds in similarly grandiose terms. In a treatise written in February–March 1517 to persuade the Damascene learned community of the virtue and justice of the new Ottoman order, ʿAli ibn Muhammad al-Lakhmi al-Ishbili began his account of Selim's reign with the assertion that the Ottoman ruler was in fact the renewer of the faith (*mujaddid*) whom God had promised to send at the beginning of each new century.¹²⁸ Similarly, on the first Friday after the Ottoman occupation of Damascus, the Shafiʿi judge of Damascus, Wali al-Din Muhammad ibn al-Farfur, delivered the sermon in the Umayyad Mosque in which he lauded the Ottoman sultan and declared him the rightful protector of the Holy Cities (*khadim al-haramayn*).¹²⁹ As in the brief Ottoman occupation of Tabriz in 1514, the recruitment of local notables to the Ottoman cause constituted an important component of the Ottoman strategy to legitimize and effect rule in these newly conquered cities. As Bidlisi had done in Tabriz in the wake of the Ottoman conquest, the Ottomans, through the Friday sermons of Ibn al-Farfur, sought to communicate their vision of rule to the general populace of Damascus. Throughout the first year of the Ottoman presence in the city, Ibn al-Farfur regularly delivered the Friday sermon in the Umayyad Mosque.¹³⁰ Perhaps partly in recognition of his regular pronouncement of Ottoman legitimating priorities in his sermons, Ibn al-Farfur was

¹²⁸ ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad al- Ishbīlī, *al-Durr al-muṣān fī sirat al-Muẓaffar Salīm Khān* (Cairo: ʿIsā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1962), 1.

¹²⁹ Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mufākahat al-Khillān fī ḥawadith al-zamān: taʾrīkh Miṣr wa-al-Shām* (al-Qāhirah: al-Muʾassasah al-Miṣriyah al-ʿAmmah lil-Taʾālīf wa-al-Tarjamah wa-al-Ṭibāʾah wa-al-Nashr, 1962), 2:33.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 2:37, 68.

rewarded with the chief judgeship of Damascus when Selim wintered in the city in 1516–18.¹³¹

Despite Bidlisi and Ibn al-Farfur's positive portrayal of the new Ottoman order, the early days of Ottoman rule in Syria were far from ideal. In fact, the support of these local notables was especially necessary during the early stages of the Ottoman occupation of Syria, as the first weeks of Ottoman rule in Damascus wrought considerable disorder. For the Damascenes, the defeat of the Mamluks at Marj Dabiq initiated a chaotic period in which the retreating Mamluk army pillaged the city.¹³² With the withdrawal of Mamluk forces in advance of the Ottoman arrival, the city fell into a state of complete disorder, during which time roving bands looted many areas of the city.¹³³ The arrival of Ottoman forces thwarted these mobs considerably, but the Ottoman troops who were billeted in the homes of Damascenes, in turn, pillaged and ransacked many of the homes to which they were posted.¹³⁴ The reverberations of these disturbances were registered even in Egypt, where the Mamluk historian Ibn Iyas noted the arrival of notable Damascenes fleeing their homes for the relative security of Cairo.¹³⁵

The Ottoman advance on Egypt in January 1517 precipitated even greater chaos. Although the Ottomans resoundingly defeated Tumanbay at the Battle of Raydaniya on Thursday, January 22, 1517, Selim could not secure the city from his own marauding soldiers for several weeks and from the remaining Mamluk troops for another few months.¹³⁶ According to Ibn Iyas, in the early days after Raydaniya, Ottoman troops pillaged the homes of Mamluks and the public granaries and killed in the streets anyone whom they suspected of being a Mamluk. Despite the issuance of daily proclamations assuring the public of security, the Ottoman troops apparently ignored the directive and continued to plunder the city. During

¹³¹ Ibn Tulun mentions that Ibn al-Farfur was appointed judge on Friday, February 18, 1518, after rumors spread that the scholar had become a Hanafi (ibid., 2:82).

¹³² Muhammad Adnan Bakhit, *The Ottoman Province of Damascus in the Sixteenth Century* (Beirut: Librairie du Liban, 1982), 3.

¹³³ Ibid., 5; Bakhit's assessment is based largely on Ibn Ṭulūn's testimony (Ibn Ṭulūn, *Mufākahat al-khillān fī ḥawādith al-zamān*, 2:27–8).

¹³⁴ Bakhit, *The Ottoman Province of Damascus*, 11; Ibn Ṭulūn, *Mufākahat al-khillān fī ḥawādith al-zamān*.

¹³⁵ Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i' al-zuhūr fī waqā'i' al-duhūr*, 5:106.

¹³⁶ For a discussion of the dating of the Battle of Raydaniya, see Benjamin Lellouch, "La politique mamlouke de Selim Ier," in *La Conquête ottomane de l'Égypte (1517): Arrière-plan, impact, échos*, eds. Benjamin Lellouch and Nicolas Michel (Boston: Brill, 2013), 169, n.18.

this time, Ottoman and Mamluk forces engaged in pitched battles in the streets of Cairo and Selim was unable to fully subdue Tumanbay until March–April 1517, three months after his arrival in Cairo.

Early efforts of the Ottomans to establish a judicial administration in the city proved equally chaotic. Within the first two weeks of late January 1517, Selim appointed Kemalpaşazade to see to the judicial affairs of Cairo. Kemalpaşazade, referred to in the Arab sources as the judge of the Arabs (*qadi al-ʿarab*), established himself in the *Salihya* school, dismissed the Mamluk appointed deputy judges and witnesses, and closed access to all other courts in the city.¹³⁷ Ibn Iyas notes that as a consequence of this policy the judicial administration of the city ground to a halt and “the people lost their rights and the exercise of religious rulings were disturbed in those days.”¹³⁸ Kemalpaşazade, despite his renown among learned Ottomans, quickly developed a reputation for incompetence among Cairenes, since, in the estimation of Ibn Iyas, he “was more ignorant than a donkey. He was not competent in any matters concerning religious rulings.”¹³⁹ Moreover, Egyptian observers criticized the Ottoman court procedures as fundamentally corrupt and unjust. In particular, Ibn Iyas denounced the Ottoman practice of compensating judges through fees levied on those with business at the court. The imposition of an entirely Ottoman approach to judicial affairs did not last long. Within one month of this disastrous effort to impose Ottoman procedures on Egyptians, Selim backed down from this position. On March 6, 1517, he called the four chief judges of Egypt who had been his prisoners since their capture in the wake of Marj Dabiq, bestowed robes of honor on them, and reinstated them to their offices in Egypt.¹⁴⁰

As an eyewitness to many of these tumultuous developments, Bidlisi became dismayed and eventually outraged by what he perceived as Ottoman injustices in Syria and Egypt. According to Bidlisi’s son, Ebu’l-Fazl Mehmed, two incidents in Cairo catalyzed Bidlisi’s frustration and prompted him to write a scathing criticism of the Ottoman administration of Mamluk lands. While the two incidents likely provided the immediate

¹³⁷ Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ al-zuhūr fī waqāʾiʿ al-duhūr*, 5:165.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.; Haydar Çelebi corroborates Ibn Iyas’ account, as he mentions Selim’s meeting with the ‘Abbasi Caliph and the four judges of Egypt on March 6, 1517, presumably upon their reappointment. On April 27, 1517, he notes that Selim forgave Kemalpaşazade for a matter that had angered the sultan and reappointed the scholar to his position as chief military judge of Anatolia (Haydar Çelebi, “Rūznāme,” 1:487, 489).

impetus for Bidlisi to publicize his condemnatory views, the wider context of disorder and chaos wrought in Syria and Egypt in the wake of the Ottoman conquests likely provided substantial motivation as well. The first incident concerned the Ottoman appraisal and accounting of the wealth and property of Mamluk households. In particular, Ebu'l-Fazl Mehmed recalls his father's outrage at the plundering of the Mamluk residences of Cairo. Specifically, the Ottoman finance officers appointed a civilian functionary of the Mamluk regime as translator to aid them in their work. On the pretext of confiscating Mamluk property, this translator encouraged the Ottomans to enter the private dwellings of former Mamluks and plunder their belongings, which greatly disturbed the notables and scholars of Cairo. To make matters worse, the Ottoman finance director of Anatolia, Dizdarzade Mehmed Çelebi, investigated the issue and absolved the guilty parties of any wrongdoing.¹⁴¹ While Ebu'l-Fazl Mehmed lays the primary blame for the incident on the Mamluk functionary who encouraged the pillaging, clearly Bidlisi was also outraged by the conduct of one of the most senior Ottoman statesmen.

The second incident concerned the Ottoman reappointment of the Mamluk-era judges. In particular, Bidlisi objected to the behavior of the most senior Ottoman judge, Zeyrekzade Rükneddin, the military judge of Rumelia, whom Ebu'l-Fazl Mehmed described as a man renowned "for avarice, scheming for status, and a paucity of compassion for the down-trodden."¹⁴² Sometime after the reappointment of the four judges, Zeyrekzade solicited a bribe of 10,000 gold florins from the newly reappointed Shafi'i judge of Egypt, Kamal al-Din al-Tawil and similar bribes from the other three judges.¹⁴³ Although Ebu'l-Fazl Mehmed notes that it was common practice during the Mamluk era to offer payment to the sultan's treasury at the time of a judicial appointment, he adds that "this occurrence, in contravention of the *shari'a*, also increased the complaints and sense of injustice felt by the learned and notable men of Cairo."¹⁴⁴ In view of these complaints, Bidlisi decided to bring these matters to the attention of the sultan.

Bidlisi voiced his objections to these incidents within a work that Selim commissioned him to prepare while in Egypt. Specifically, Selim asked for

¹⁴¹ For the account of this incident and Dizdarzade Mehmed Çelebi's complicity, see Bidlīsī, *Salīmshāhnāma*, 173a.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 173b.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

a Persian translation of the fourteenth-century Arabic zoological work of Kamal al-Din Muhammad al-Damiri (d. 1405) entitled *Hayat al-hayawan* (*The Life of Animals*).¹⁴⁵ Within the context of this translation Bidlisi included a panegyric on Selim's conquest of Egypt that also expressed Bidlisi's objections to the Ottoman administrative policies in the newly conquered lands.¹⁴⁶ The first and second halves of the poem juxtapose the celebration of Selim's qualities as a conquering ruler and the administrative mismanagement and corruption produced in the wake of these conquests. On one hand, Selim is "a king who conquers the world from end to end / with the dominion-conquering sword it [fell to] the world-grasping hand."¹⁴⁷ Yet despite such power, he has inadvertently ruled unwisely: "Why in your age is knowledge trampled under the foot of ignorance / Why is wisdom abased, as you are the Alexander of the age?"¹⁴⁸ Within the latter half of the poem, Bidlisi presents several criticisms of Ottoman efforts to administer Mamluk lands and accuses the Ottoman administration of perpetuating the injustices of the Mamluks, especially through the sale of religious appointments:

The aggrievances, which were the custom of the ignoble Circassians,
Why, in your age, are they multiplied in this land?

How do you entrust the righteous path to the hands of faithless ones
Who sell religion and buy the world?

I ask those occupants of religious offices
O Pious One, is it lawful to sell religious posts?¹⁴⁹

Not only did Bidlisi accuse the sultan's deputies of gross misconduct, but the complaint also undermined the legitimacy of the entire Ottoman enterprise in Syria and Egypt. In the poem, Bidlisi expressed the hope that he could set right his conflict with Selim's servants, if only he could obtain a private audience with the sultan.¹⁵⁰ Despite such hope, he viewed the chances of such an audience unlikely and at the end of the poem he used his old age as a pretext to request permission to retire from sultanic

¹⁴⁵ For the author's presentation, see Bidlisi, *Khavāṣṣ al-ḥayawān*. TSMK Ms. Hazine 1665.

¹⁴⁶ The poem, known as *al-qasida al-misriyya* (*The Egyptian Ode*), can be found in Bidlisi's history of Selim (Bidlisi, *Salīmshāhnāma*, 173b–76b).

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 175a.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 175b.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 175b.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 175b.

service.¹⁵¹ The serious allegations leveled against the sultan for negligence and against his administrators for corruption suggest either the robust confidence Bidlisi felt in his position as trusted adviser to Selim or the complete resignation of a man resolved to withdraw from political life after his views had been rejected. Few other advisers had the confidence to publicly criticize not only a sultan's servants, but also the sovereign himself. This confidence, bordering on hubris, suggests that Bidlisi genuinely felt that he had the authority and rapport with Selim to set the matter right should he be given a private audience with the sultan. Alternatively, the public expression of Bidlisi's condemnatory views may also be interpreted as the parting shot of a man whose political career was finished.

No doubt the circulation of Bidlisi's grievances caused considerable discomfit within the upper echelons of the Ottoman court. Although Selim offered Bidlisi 1,000 gold florins for the completion of *The Life of Animals*, Bidlisi rejected the gift out of fear that its acceptance without the top ministers' knowledge would lead to considerable hardship for him.¹⁵² Instead, Bidlisi reiterated his request for an audience with the sultan. The ministers felt compelled to comply and the poem was read to Selim in the presence of the viziers, military judges, and finance directors. Although Selim was outraged by the conduct of his servants, he was equally perturbed with Bidlisi for the exaggerated claims leveled in the poem, the rejection of the sultan's gift, and the insistence on obtaining an audience. In the wake of this meeting, Bidlisi resolved that he had no other recourse but to completely withdraw from sultanic service.¹⁵³ This resignation entailed a complete separation from the court. Rather than return to Ottoman lands in the company of the sultan and his entourage, Bidlisi returned almost immediately. On July 15, 1517, Bidlisi boarded one of the ships of the Ottoman fleet anchored at Alexandria and returned to Istanbul.¹⁵⁴

Before Bidlisi's departure, he performed one final duty, the record of which the Ottoman chancellor Feridun Beğ subsequently included in his collection of Ottoman royal correspondence in the latter half of the sixteenth century. In early July 1517, he completed the victory proclamation that explained and justified the Ottoman conquest of

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 176b.

¹⁵² Ibid., 177a.

¹⁵³ The details of this incident are related in *The History of Selime* (ibid., 176a).

¹⁵⁴ Ebu'l-Fazl Mehmed mentions that his father returned to Istanbul with the Ottoman fleet. Haydar Çelebi notes that the Ottoman admiral, Ca'fer Ağa, departed for Istanbul on July 15, 1517 (Haydar Çelebi, "Rûznâme," 1:491).

Mamluk domains to the Shirvanshah. The lengthy epistle described the Ottoman military campaigns from the siege of Kemah in 1515 to the conquest of Egypt in 1517 and justified these activities in terms of the requisite duties of the vicegerency of God (*khilafat-i rahmani*).¹⁵⁵ Although ostensibly a clear statement of Ottoman ideology, the announcement was also a highly individualized document, as it prominently featured Bidlisi's preferred titulature and concept of sovereignty. He had employed the title since his earlier days as a secretary in the Aqquyunlu chancery, and, upon his immigration to Ottoman lands, consistently deployed it and its underlying concept in a number of works, including *The Eight Paradises*, that he dedicated to members of the Ottoman royal family.¹⁵⁶ Selim's decision to appoint Bidlisi to compose this letter appears at odds with his near-simultaneous censure of the aging scholar's most recent criticisms of leading statesmen. In this sense, this last professional act fairly encapsulates one of the primary characteristics of his professional career; even as he was recognized in the highest strata of the Ottoman court as a talented rhetorician capable of formulating the most effective statements of political ideology, his tendency to claim stylistic superiority or the moral high ground, criticize colleagues, and foment enmity and envy hampered him throughout his career in Ottoman lands.

BIDLISI'S *SALIMSHAHNAMA* AND LEGACY

The affair in Egypt marked the end of Bidlisi's political career, but not his literary one. In the final years of his life, Bidlisi devoted his energies to recording the events of Selim's reign and his role in them. Although he was unable to complete the work before his death on November 18, 1520, his son Ebu'l-Fazl Mehmed took up the task of editing his father's manuscript and circulated the work, entitled *Salimshahnama* (*The History of Sultan Selim*) in the early reign of Selim's grandson and namesake, Selim II (r. 1566–74).

Bidlisi conceived of writing a history of Selim's reign from a desire to continue the celebration of the deeds of the Ottoman dynasts into the reign of the current sultan. More immediately, Bidlisi states that he was

¹⁵⁵ Feridün Beğ, *Münşe'ât es-selâtin*, 1:438.

¹⁵⁶ For a detailed discussion of *khilafat-i rahmani*, see Chapter 6.

inspired to take up this project by three emigres to Ottoman lands, who had recently gained renown for their own works recounting Selim's reign. The first was 'Abd al-Rahim al-'Abbasi, an Egyptian scholar famed for his knowledge of prophetic traditions and the literary arts who joined Selim's court after the conquest of Egypt.¹⁵⁷ Although his history of Selim is no longer extant, Bidlisi mentions that 'Abd al-Rahim wrote a chronicle of Selim's deeds in Arabic. The second author whom Bidlisi mentioned was Qazi 'Abd al-Kabir al-Latifi, who wrote a work in Persian that detailed Selim's conquests of Arab lands. Qazi 'Abd al-Kabir al-Latifi, known as Qazizada, had been employed as the superintendent of the Safavi endowment at Ardabil.¹⁵⁸ After his capture at Chaldiran, he found employment within the Ottoman secretarial corps.¹⁵⁹ Qazizada participated in the Ottoman campaigns in Syria and Egypt, during which time he assisted in early Ottoman efforts to organize the financial resources of Syria.¹⁶⁰ Shortly after Selim's return to Ottoman lands in 1518, Qazizada presented his history of Selim's Arab campaigns.¹⁶¹ The last émigré whom Bidlisi singles out as a source of inspiration was Muhammad Ada'i Shirazi, who wrote a Persian verse history of Selim's reign.¹⁶² Bidlisi's citation of these three authors reflects the dynamic and self-aware climate of historiographical production during this brief period of monumental change within the Ottoman Sultanate.¹⁶³ After all, not only were these authors writing histories in the immediate wake of the events that they described, but they did so in conversation and competition with one another, an aspect of historical writing to which we will return in later chapters.

Beyond these explicitly acknowledged sources of inspiration, Bidlisi likely conceived of his last project as an apologia and memoir of his activities on behalf of Selim. In contrast to the other histories of the sovereign that circulated, Bidlisi's narrative is filled with references to his

¹⁵⁷ Taşköprüzade, *al-Shaqā'iq al-nu'mānīyah*, 411.

¹⁵⁸ Ḥakīm Shāh Muḥammad Qazvīnī, *Tazkirah-i majālis al-naḥā'is*, ed. 'Alī Aṣghar Ḥikmat (Tehran: Kitābforūshi-i Manūchihrī, 1363), XX.

¹⁵⁹ Qāzīzāda, *Ghazavāt-i Salīm Khān*, 2a–3b.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 87a.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 235a.

¹⁶² Bidlisi specifies the influence of these three émigré writers in his introduction to *Book of Selīm Shah* (Bidlisi, *Salīmshāhnāma*, 21b).

¹⁶³ For a discussion of this "first wave" of historical writing on Selim, see Çıpa, *History of Selīm Shah*, 140–44.

own biography and activities. His narrative of Selim's reign frequently shifts between the activities within the Ottoman court and his own activities on behalf of the sultan in Kurdistan and Diyarbakr. The inclusion of these autobiographical details contrasts markedly with the majority of contemporary histories of Selim's reign. Certainly, this difference can be explained by the crucial role that Bidlisi played in many of these events, yet, in the immediate context of Bidlisi's exile from court, the defensive tone and lengthy expositions of his motives suggest that he also sought to defend his own reputation by clarifying his involvement in a number of messy affairs of state. In this way, the work serves not only as a testament to the lasting memory of the conquering ruler, but also as the final record of a man who played a central role in the Ottoman conquests of eastern lands, even while he occasionally opposed the specific Ottoman policies that were implemented there.

Despite these professional and personal motivations, Bidlisi's work was never fully realized in his own lifetime. Two months after the death of Selim and the accession of the sultan's only son Süleyman, Bidlisi died in Istanbul on November 18, 1520 at the age of sixty-three, and was buried beside the mosque that his wife Zaynab Khatun had constructed in Eyüp, outside the city walls.¹⁶⁴ Although Ebu'l-Fazl Mehmed does not record the cause of his father's death, it is possible that Bidlisi was one of the victims of the plague outbreak that affected Istanbul throughout the autumn of 1520.¹⁶⁵

At the time of Bidlisi's death, Ebu'l-Fazl Mehmed was engaged in royal business in Syria, where he was responsible for formulating the first Ottoman law books (*kanunname*) for several Syrian districts. His mission in Syria at the time of his father's death threatened the preservation of Bidlisi's literary legacy, since, as a consequence of his absence from Istanbul, Bidlisi's papers, according to Ebu'l-Fazl Mehmed, became dispersed.¹⁶⁶ In the preface to his father's history of Selim, Mehmed notes that he spent several years trying to recover his father's personal records

¹⁶⁴ On the date of his death, see Ebu'l-Fazl Mehmed's remarks, Bidlîsî, *Salîmshâhnâme*, 47b.; on his grave, see Hâfîz Hüseyin Ayyânsarâyî, *Ḥadîkat'l-cevâmi'*, ed. Ali Sati' Bey (Istanbul: Matbaa-i Âmire, 1281), 1:262–63.

¹⁶⁵ Nûkhet Varlık notes that outbreaks of the plague usually began in August and persisted into the late autumn or early winter. She also notes that a Venetian report referenced the continued persistence of the plague in Constantinople into November 1520 (Nûkhet Varlık, "Disease and Empire: A History of Plague Epidemics in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire [1453–1600]," 2008, 74).

¹⁶⁶ Bidlîsî, *Salîmshâhnâme*, 47b.

and present them to Süleyman.¹⁶⁷ Indeed, this later period, one generation after Bidlisi's death, was crucial to the lasting literary legacy of Bidlisi in Ottoman lands. For while his work had been well known in his own day, it may well have receded to the margins of Ottoman historical consciousness, if not for Ebu'l-Fazl Mehmed's efforts in the reign of Süleyman. Between 1545 and 1568, a scribe named Mehmed ibn Bilal, likely working in the employ of Ebu'l-Fazl Mehmed, produced four copies of *The Eight Paradises* from one of Bidlisi's personal copies and reproduced a compendium of Bidlisi's treatises, lesser known works, and correspondence.¹⁶⁸ In the last years of his own life, Ebu'l-Fazl Mehmed gathered what materials of Bidlisi's unfinished history that he could locate, edited the work, and presented it to Süleyman's son and successor, the newly enthroned sultan Selim II.

Ebu'l-Fazl Mehmed's efforts to memorialize his father's work were part of a larger nostalgic interest among Ottoman elites in the reign of Selim II. In the intervening decades, the reign of Süleyman had altered many of the features of Ottoman state and society, yet for many of the aging functionaries of the Ottoman court, the transformative events of their youth during Selim's reign marked a watershed moment in the history of the Ottoman dynasty.¹⁶⁹ Selim's eastern conquests had reoriented the polity. For the first time in its history, the Ottoman Sultanate governed a majority Muslim population and began to articulate a conception of rule befitting its leader's status as the preeminent ruler of Islam. In this context, it is little wonder that Ebu'l-Fazl Mehmed and his colleagues, in some measure, reaffirmed the significance of Bidlisi and his work. After all, Bidlisi's political activities and literary production concerned the very political transformations and ideological reorientations that this aging generation

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 47b–48a.

¹⁶⁸ I speculate that Mehmed ibn Bilal was a servant of Ebu'l-Fazl Mehmed based upon the relatively unique access that he had to Bidlisi's papers. In addition to the four copies of *The Eight Paradises* that he produced (Berlin Ms. Orient 3179 [copied in 1560], İstanbul Üniversitesi Nadir Eserler Kütüphanesi 619 [copied in 1560–61], Dānishgāh-i Adabiyāt-i Tabriz, Ms. 11 [copied in 1560], and SK Ms. Halet Efendi İlavesi 191 [copied in 1568–69]), he also produced the compendium of Bidlisi's work (Ms. Esad Efendi 1888), the contents of which include rare and, in some cases, unique copies of Bidlisi's work. Moreover, during this period, Mehmed ibn Bilal was also active in copying the original works of Ebu'l-Fazl Mehmed; see, for instance, Ebū'l-Mehmed Efendi, *Munteḥab ve muḥteşar Vaṣṣāf tarih-i tercümesi* (Ms. Ali Emiri Tarih 619) copied in February 1545, the same year in which he copied Bidlisi's compendium (Esad Efendi 1888). For further details, see Markiewicz, "The Crisis of Rule," 406–8.

¹⁶⁹ Şahin, *Empire and Power in the Reign of Süleyman*, 183–85.

fondly recollected. Although such reaffirmation frequently belied the volatile and disappointing relationship Bidlisi endured with many of the men at the Ottoman court, the sentiment was not altogether unfitting. After all, even if Bidlisi never fully felt at home among the Ottomans, he, more than many, had performed a critical role in shaping and recording the monumental developments of his time.

PART II

The Timurid Vocabulary of Sovereignty

In a broad sense, Bidlisi's political thought was conditioned by a particular tradition of sovereignty, which had its origins in the career of Timur, was developed through the competing claims of his descendants, and was adapted ultimately to courts throughout the central lands of Islam. In this way, the Timurid expression of sovereignty became a pronounced feature of kingship for all of the major polities of the sixteenth century. Yet the articulation and spread of this conception of sovereignty was not the product of some amorphous and abstract intellectual process. In many instances the adaptation of the Timurid conception of kingship can be traced through the movement of scholars and secretaries from one court to another and the adaptation of a new vocabulary of sovereignty to ever wider political contexts.

Indeed, this movement of scholars and secretaries was largely in keeping with certain traditions of circulation that had helped maintain a cohesion across the Islamicate ecumene even over long periods of political disunity. Although Islamic lands experienced constant political fragmentation after the dissolution of effective authority by the Abbasid Caliphate in the tenth century, Muslims maintained a high level of social and cultural cohesion that continued to bind the community over centuries and across varied political terrain.¹ This cultural unity was preserved by what

¹ Amira K. Bennison, "Cosmopolitan Expansion and the Fragmentation of Governance," in *The Wiley Blackwell History of Islam*, 117–36.

Marshall Hodgson termed “a common Islamicate social pattern.”² The basic feature that enabled this common social pattern consisted of a persistently upheld belief that members of any part of Muslim society should be accepted anywhere else. As a consequence of such a routinely affirmed social contract:

Representatives of the various arts and sciences moved freely, as a munificent ruler or an unkind one beckoned or pressed, from one Muslim land to another; and any man of great stature in one area was likely to be soon recognized everywhere else. Hence local cultural tendencies were continually limited and stimulated by events and ideas of an all-Muslim scope. There continued to exist a single body of interrelated traditions, developed in mutual interaction throughout Islamdom.³

Notwithstanding developments of world-systems theories by thinkers such as Immanuel Wallerstein and Janet Abou-Lughod in the decades since Hodgson expressed these views, scholars continue to affirm the basic contours of such an “Islamic world-system” in cultural and social – as opposed to political or economic – terms.⁴ For instance, John Voll observes the social and cultural dynamics of the Islamic world between 1000 and 1800 and affirms the existence of “a large, special type of ‘community of discourse.’”⁵ This Islamic discourse was shared among urban-agrarian and nomadic-pastoral societies across the Islamicate ecumene and facilitated networks of personal and organizational interaction that offered “at least a minimal sense of corporate, communal identity in the vast emerging network of discourse or world-system.”⁶ More recently, Shahab Ahmed, in his efforts to conceptualize Islam to account for its coherent contradiction, identifies the period 1350–1800 and the space, between the Balkans and Bengal, as constituting a historical complex defined by “a common paradigm of Islamic life and thought.”⁷ In this way, Voll’s Islamic discourse or Islamic world-system and Shahab Ahmed’s

² Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, 2:9.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Immanuel Wallerstein, *World-Systems Analysis: An Introduction* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004); Janet Abou-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony: The World System A.D. 1250–1350* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

⁵ John Obert Voll, “Islam as a Community of Discourse and a World-System,” in *The SAGE Handbook of Islamic Studies*, eds. Akbar S. Ahmed and Tamara Sonn (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2010), 8.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Shahab Ahmed, *What Is Islam? The Importance of Being Islamic* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016), 75.

Balkans-to-Bengal complex parallel Hodgson's common Islamicate social pattern. The effects of such a discourse, complex, or social pattern can be observed on an individual level, most famously in the example of the fourteenth-century traveler Ibn Battuta, who, "in his intercontinental wanderings, moved through a single cultural universe in which he was utterly at home."⁸ More broadly, they are also observable in what Voll terms the common organizational characteristics that helped give rise to what Hodgson had termed the Sunni internationalism emerging from the eleventh century.⁹ The features of this Sunni internationalism were exhibited through the development of cultural organizations, such as the *madrassa* or the Sufi lodge, which were privately endowed as pious foundations and hence operated largely independently of the ebb and flow of any particular political order. In other words, the social cohesion that Hodgson describes acted in various ways as a binding agent for societies across time and space and helped constitute and reinforce the Islamicate ecumene.¹⁰ Indeed, with respect to the late fifteenth century, this chapter clearly observes aspects of this social cohesion, especially in the movement of secretaries and ideas on kingship across wide geographic expanses. Yet, such cohesion was only in force up to a point. Real difference and contradiction – in language, culture, social arrangements, economic modes – existed within the Islamicate ecumene and could, at times, produce tensions of varying strengths between the centripetal pull of a common Islamicate social pattern and the centrifugal push of more localized cultural life.¹¹ For Shahab Ahmed, such tension is, in fact, embedded within the human and historical manifestation of Islam, a phenomenon

⁸ Richard M. Eaton and Michael Adas, "Islamic History as Global History," in *Islamic & European Expansion: The Forging of a Global Order* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993), 32.

⁹ Voll, "Islam as a Community of Discourse and a World-System," 9; Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, 2:255.

¹⁰ In a reevaluation of Hodgson's work, the editors of *The Wiley Blackwell History of Islam* have recently proposed the Islamic ecumene (Armando Salvatore, Johann P. Arnason, Babak Rahimi, and Roberto Totoli, "Introduction: The Formation and Transformations of the Islamic Ecumene," in *The Wiley Blackwell History of Islam*, 1–6); with respect to situating Ottoman history within a global context, see my discussion of Islamicate ecumene (Christopher Markiewicz, "Europeanist Trends and Islamic Trajectories in Early Modern Ottoman History," *Past & Present* 239 (2018): 273–81).

¹¹ Some of the limits of this common social pattern are explored by Sanjay Subrahmanyam through the concept of incommensurability between the military cultures of the Ottoman and Mughal empires of the seventeenth century, see Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Courtly Encounters: Translating Courtliness and Violence in Early Modern Eurasia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 6–21.

that encompasses both great variety and unity of human and historical experience in what Ahmed terms coherent contradiction.¹² The tension between these two patterns is also clearly apparent in the well-respected, yet quickly evolving place of Persian at the Ottoman court in the early sixteenth century. For even as skilled Persian scholars and secretaries were afforded an honorable place within the court, a shifting perception of the possibilities of an equally refined Ottoman Turkish, in certain respects, limited their impact upon the cultural terrain of Ottoman lands in the sixteenth century.

Even so, the chaotic political landscape of the fifteenth century, which witnessed the rapid expansion and devolution of competing princely courts and independent polities, certainly contributed to the frequent movement of scholars, secretaries, and statesmen across Islamic lands. Yet, the migration of these skilled men, in several important ways, constituted a continuation of modes of circulation from earlier eras. Often, such men found productive outlets for their intellectual and literary talents in the chanceries, administrative offices, and learned court gatherings of their new or temporary homes, and in this manner helped mold and spread a common discourse rooted in a vocabulary of sovereignty first pioneered in Timurid courts. Indeed, Bidlisi is representative of this process. He first adopted elements of Timurid sovereignty while working in the Aqquyunlu chancery in the 1480s, and later adapted them to the Ottoman context of the early sixteenth century, where they were absorbed, reformulated, and reintroduced to new effect in a distinctly Ottoman project of imperial definition.

SOVEREIGNTY UNDER TIMUR

The life and career of Timur offers a productive starting point for a discussion of sovereignty in late medieval Islam, especially because Timur's efforts to legitimize his political activities and conquests drew upon the most salient features of rule in Islamic lands as conceived since the advent of the Mongols in the thirteenth century.¹³ Moreover, his synthesis of these existing legitimating traditions, when overlaid with the legendary aspects of his own career, constituted a powerful and appealing

¹² Ahmed, *What Is Islam?*, 405.

¹³ On these features of rule in the Mongol period, see, for example, Jonathan Z. Brack, "Theologies of Auspicious Kingship: The Islamization of Chinggisid Sacral Kingship in the Islamic World," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 604 (2018): 1143–71.

new political dispensation that came to dominate discourses on sovereignty for several centuries over a vast territorial expanse that extended from southeastern Europe to South and Central Asia.

Over the course of his conquests, Timur faced several considerable challenges in his claim to rule. Most significantly, his origins within the lineage of a respected, yet minor branch of the Barlas tribe disqualified him from serious consideration to rule within either the Turko-Mongol or Islamic traditions to which he was socially bound.¹⁴ Most significantly, in the fourteenth century, the prestige of Chinggis Khan and his lineage still held a considerable hold on the key militarized Turko-Mongol constituencies upon which political authority was necessarily predicated. Such prestige was expressed in a conception of sovereignty as an exclusive and natural perquisite of Chinggis Khan's descendants.¹⁵ Although by the middle of the fourteenth century the Ilkhanid dynasty in Iran had all but completely unraveled, the prestige of a Chinggisid lineage still constituted the only legitimate exercise of sovereign power and acceptable claim to the title of khan.¹⁶ Indeed, throughout the middle and latter fourteenth century, non-Chinggisid warlords (*qarachu*) who managed to consolidate power frequently exercised de jure authority solely through the nominal appointment of Chinggisid khans.¹⁷ Within Islamic traditions of political authority, Timur's background posed equally insurmountable difficulties. Since the dissolution of the Abbasid caliphate at the hands of Hülegü Khan in 1258, a universally accepted Islamic conception of rule remained contested. Certainly, Muslim jurists began to argue for a modified juristic

¹⁴ On Timur's origins, see Beatrice Forbes Manz, *The Rise and Rule of Tamerlane* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 45; for a detailed discussion of Timur's purported genealogy with reference to near contemporary sources and modern scholarship, see John E. Woods, "Timur's Genealogy," in *Intellectual Studies on Islam: Essays Written in Honor of Martin B. Dickson*, eds. Michel M. Mazzaoui and Vera B. Moreen (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1990), 85–101.

¹⁵ On Chinggisid sovereignty, see Zeki Velidi Togan, *Umumi*, 296–301; Martin Dickson, "Uzbek Dynastic Theory in the Sixteenth Century," in *Trudy dvadtsat' piatogo mezhdunarodnogo kongressa vostokovedov 3* (Moscow: Izd-vo Vostochnoi Literatury, 1963), 208–16; Robert McChesney, *Waqf in Central Asia: Four Hundred Years in the History of a Muslim Shrine, 1480–1889* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), 46–60; Robert McChesney, "The Chinggisid Restoration in Central Asia, 1500–1785," in *The Cambridge History of Inner Asia: The Chinggisid Age*, eds. Nicola di Cosmo, Allen J. Frank, and Peter B. Golden (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 277–91.

¹⁶ Beatrice Forbes Manz, "Tamerlane and the Symbolism of Sovereignty," *Iranian Studies* 21, 1/2 (January 1, 1988): 105; Manz, "Tamerlane's Career and Its Uses," 3.

¹⁷ For examples of non-Chinggisid warlords appointing figurehead khans, see Woods, "Timur's Genealogy," 103.

conception of the caliphate – one that could accommodate post-Abbasid political realities – but such efforts never gained the widespread and universal acceptance of earlier juridical formulations.¹⁸ In other words, Abbasid lineage still mattered in the eyes of many.

During this period, Abbasid and Chinggisid dispensations continued to exercise a profound hold upon political imaginations within Islamic lands. As Thomas Welsford notes with respect to late sixteenth-century Central Asia, such a dispensation is “an episteme within which people identified Chingizid descent with some quality of chosen-ness deemed to represent a necessary condition of khalnal authority.”¹⁹ This epistemic quality of Chinggisid sovereignty helps explain its long lasting hold in Central Asia and “why the termination of this authority necessitated such rhetorical convolutions on the part of those keen to justify a new state of affairs.”²⁰ The same dynamic may, of course, be extended to the Abbasid dispensation, especially in relation to its continuing relevance for the Mamluk Sultanate into the sixteenth century.²¹ Yet equally, if Abbasid or Chinggisid lineage were necessary conditions of rule, they were not sufficient conditions on their own and from the middle of the fourteenth century onwards non-Abbasid, non-Chinggisid rulers emerged and began to experiment with new expressions of authority. Indeed, over the course of his lifetime, Timur developed several policies and frameworks for sovereignty in response to these ideological challenges that were directed alternatively toward Turko-Mongol and Muslim constituencies. At all times, these policies remained flexible and adaptable to Timur’s particular circumstances. In other words, not all of these policies were operable at all times and in equal force. In fact, modern scholars have widely accepted John Woods’ suggestion that Timur’s claims to sovereignty can be differentiated broadly with reference to two periods, which correspond to the earlier circumstances of his career between 1360 and 1381 and a later period between 1381 and his death in 1405.²²

¹⁸ For a detailed discussion of these juridical reformulations, see Hassan, *Longing for the Lost Caliphate*, 108–41.

¹⁹ Thomas Welsford, *Four Types of Loyalty in Early Modern Central Asia: The Tūqāy-Tīmūrid Takeover of Greater Mā Warā al-Nahr, 1598–1605* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 75.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Mustafa Banister, “Casting the Caliph in a Cosmic Role: Examining al-Suyūṭī’s Historical Vision,” in *Al-Suyūṭī, a Polymath of the Mamlūk Period: Proceedings of the Rhemed Day of the First Conference of the School of Mamlūk Studies (Ca’Foscari University, Venice, June 23, 2014)*, ed. Antonella Ghersetti (Brill: Leiden, 2017), 98–117.

²² Woods, “Timur’s Genealogy,” 100.

In the earlier period of Timur's reign, the conqueror relied on several interrelated policies that emphasized his role as protector of the Chaghatayid Khanate, so named after Chaghatay Khan, the second son of Chinggis Khan. Timur frequently proclaimed his fealty to Chinggis Khan's formulation of Mongol customary law – the *yasa* – and administered his growing domains in staunch accordance with the code.²³ Yet the exercise of sovereign power by a non-Chinggisid warlord still posed a significant problem. To accommodate this deficiency, between 1370 and 1402, Timur appointed and recognized two descendants of Chinggis Khan as figurehead khans, yet continued to exercise *de facto* power in his capacity as a commander (*amir*).²⁴ Concurrently, Timur sought to strengthen his ties with the legacy of Chinggis Khan through several marriages between himself and his male descendants with Chinggisid princesses. He capitalized on these alliances through the adoption of the title *kuragan* (imperial son-in-law) and proclaimed its significance on the documents, coins, and literary works that his court produced.²⁵ Whereas in the earlier period of Timur's reign, the purpose of these legitimating strategies seemed primarily fixed upon asserting his authority as protector of the Chaghatayid inheritance in Turkestan and Transoxiana, during the latter part of his career, these same policies were increasingly deployed to bolster claims to reestablish the entire Chinggisid political community across Eurasia.²⁶

Concurrent with these strategies of Chinggisid accommodation, Timur also developed policies to burnish his credentials as a ruler within an Islamic framework. With the expansion of Timur's ambitions to encompass all Iranian lands once ruled by the Ilkhanids, he deployed symbols and terminology that resonated in an Islamic context. In 1381, before setting out on the conquest of Khurasan, he sought and obtained the endorsement of two renowned religious figures of the region.²⁷ In this campaign and those that followed throughout Iran, Timur asserted that he conquered in the name of the emperor of Islam (*padishah-i islam*) – his Chinggisid figurehead leader – without reference to Mongol traditions.²⁸

²³ Ibid., 100–1.

²⁴ Manz, "Tamerlane and the Symbolism of Sovereignty," 106; Woods, "Timur's Genealogy," 101–2.

²⁵ Mano Eiji, "Amir Timur Kuragan – Timur ke no keifu to Timur no tachiba," *Toyosho-Kenkyu* 34,4 (1976): 110; Beatrice Manze in Manz, "Tamerlane and the Symbolism of Sovereignty," 110; Woods, "Timur's Genealogy," 99.

²⁶ Woods, "Timur's Genealogy," 106–9.

²⁷ Ibid., 105.

²⁸ Ibid.

Notwithstanding the widespread destruction wrought by these campaigns and the broad condemnation they elicited from Muslim scholars, Timur sought to present his conquests as a reconstitution of the broad temporal authority exercised in Islamic lands by the Muslim Ilkhanid rulers of the early fourteenth century. In the final years of his reign, Timur's conquests brought him into greater contact and eventually conflict with the Ottoman sultan Bayezid I (r. 1389–1402), who, as the victor over the Crusader army at Nicopolis in 1396, began to assert with newfound confidence his status within Islamic lands as an exemplary warrior of the faith (*ghazi*).²⁹ Perhaps in ideological response to these developments, Timur sought to cast his campaigns in India in 1397 as a great conquest on behalf of Islam in the historical and literary mold of the great warrior of the faith, Sultan Mahmud of Ghazna.³⁰ In a work initially produced and presented to Timur around 1400, Ghiyas al-Din 'Ali Yazdi celebrated Timur as *ghazi* and recounted the conqueror's speech on the outset of the campaign in which he condemned the false faith of the ostensible Muslim rulers of Delhi who, in Timur's estimation, had actually succumbed to the idolatry of their subjects.³¹

Beyond these policies geared toward Chinggisid and Islamic modes of legitimacy, Timur possibly cultivated a third aspect of legitimation in his final years of life. By the beginning of the fifteenth century, the extent of his conquests and the grandeur of his monumental construction projects offered a record of his rule that presented its own legitimating logic.³² After all, Timur had personally conducted successful raids and conquests across a geographic expanse that ranged from the Russian steppe to the Gangetic plains of northern India, and from the Mediterranean to the borderlands of China. His resounding successes, like the great conquests of earlier centuries, seemed to indicate divine favor. And, indeed Timur

²⁹ Muslu, *The Ottomans and the Mamluks*, 81–82.

³⁰ Michele Bernardini, *Memoire et propagande à l'époque timouride* (Paris: Association pour l'avancement des études iraniennes, 2008), 79–80.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 97–99; There is some dispute in modern scholarship regarding the date of completion of *Rūznāma-yi Ghazavāt-i Hindūstān*. Bernardini suggests that the work was initially completed around 1400 and only presented to Shahrukh in 1415 (*ibid.*, 91, 93); in contrast, John Woods is inclined to suggest that the work was completed in 1415, yet substantially incorporated material from a no longer extant, similarly titled work by Qazi Nasir al-Din 'Umar (John E. Woods, "The Rise of Tīmūrid Historiography," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 43 (1987): 83, 84). In either case, we may tentatively suggest that the image of *ghaza* as preserved in the extant version of the *Rūznāma-yi Ghazavāt-i Hindūstān* reflects the political and ideological climate shortly after his return from northern India.

³² Manz, "Tamerlane's Career and Its Uses," 4.

sought to exploit the ideological potential of such a possibility with the adaptation of the term *sahib-qiran* as his primary moniker.³³ In the final years, such successes and the ideological weight that they carried were likely sufficient on their own to legitimate his claim to independent sovereign rule. After the death of Timur's second figurehead khan, Sultan-Mahmud, in 1402, Timur declined to appoint a successor and appeared to rule solely in his own name.³⁴ This last mode of legitimation – one which celebrated rather than obscured his humble origins and pointed to his subsequent successes as a mark of cosmic and divine favor – would become increasingly significant for Timur's descendants when they began to compete among themselves for sovereign authority after his death in 1405. In this context, descent from Timur alone constituted sufficient grounds for sovereign rule.

SOVEREIGNTY UNDER THE EARLY TIMURIDS

In the twenty-five years following Timur's death in 1405, two political and religious developments altered the framework of sovereignty established during the reign of the conqueror. The first development concerned the succession struggle among Timur's descendants and its impact on Timur's model of sovereignty. The second development concerned the broader and older search for alternative Islamic political structures that originated in the dissolution of the Abbasid Caliphate, and temporarily coalesced around a number of millenarian movements in the 1420s that constituted a distinct messianic challenge to the political order.³⁵ Throughout this period, the Chinggisid and Islamic ideologies synthesized by Timur remained in force, yet their emphases and specific expressions evolved to accommodate the new realities imposed by these political and religious developments.

The fragility of Timur's political project was most immediately exposed by the succession struggle that erupted among his descendants, and only

³³ The title *sahib-qiran* is used throughout Shami's chronicle of Timur completed before the ruler's death (Nizām al-Dīn Shāmī, *Histoire des conquêtes de Tamerlan*); on Shami's work, see Woods, "The Rise of Tīmūrid Historiography," 85–87.

³⁴ Woods, "Timur's Genealogy," 114.

³⁵ For a discussion of the religious and social conditions that helped give rise to these movements, see Bashir, *Messianic Hopes and Mystical Visions*, 31–41.

came to a fully satisfactory end with the consolidation of power by Timur's youngest son Shahrukh in 1418. Although most of the Turkic military elite within Timur's core domains supported one of his descendants in the wake of his death, there was no broadly agreed upon constitutional mechanism to regulate succession.³⁶ In his lifetime, Timur had favored succession through the line of his son Jahangir (d. 1376), yet the sons of Jahangir proved inexperienced and ineffective at consolidating power.³⁷ Moreover, in keeping with Turko-Mongol dynastic traditions, Timur had granted his sons and grandsons large appanages from which they could form effective bases of power and assert their own independent authority.³⁸ The resulting struggle played out over the following thirteen years and resulted in the deaths of several Timurid princes.

During this period of conflict, the various princely households of Timur's descendants established competing courts that produced their own ideological rationale for sovereign rule. Such competition was quickly reflected in the administrative and literary products of these courts. One of the most active courts in this regard, and one that would have a significant effect on subsequent expressions of Timurid sovereignty, centered in Shiraz. From this city, one of Timur's grandsons, Iskandar ibn 'Umar-Shaykh, governed and briefly challenged his uncle Shahrukh's claims to preeminence between 1409 and 1414.³⁹ In the first instance, Iskandar's ideology of sovereignty was informed by the intellectual luminaries that his patronage attracted: Sufis, such as Shah Ni'matallah Vali; theologians, such as Sayyid Sharif Jurjani; occult lettrists, such as Sa'in al-Din Turka; and astrologers, such as Jamshid Kashi.⁴⁰ Such patronage encouraged varied scholarly products, including astronomical tracts, treatises on the nature of God's unity (*'ilm-i tawhid*), and

³⁶ Binbaş, *Intellectual Networks in Timurid Iran*, 15–16, 170–72; on succession challenges among Turko-Mongolian dynasties, see Fletcher, "Turko-Mongolian Monarchic Tradition," 236–51.

³⁷ Manz, *Power, Politics and Religion in Timurid Iran*, 16–17.

³⁸ Woods, *The Aqquyunlu*, 20; Subtelny, *Timurids in Transition*, 36.

³⁹ On Iskandar's brief rule and cultural activities, see Jean Aubin, "Le mécénat timouride a Chiraz," *Studia Islamica* 8 (January 1, 1957): 71–88; Priscilla P. Soucek, "Eskandar B.'Omar Šayx B. Timur: A Biography," *Oriente Moderno*, ns 15 (76), 2 (January 1, 1996): 73–87; İlker Evrim Binbaş, "Timurid Experimentation with Eschatological Absolutism: Mīrzā Iskandar, Shāh Ni'matullāh Walī, and Sayyid Sharīf Jurjānī in 815/1412," in *Unity in Diversity: Mysticism, Messianism and the Construction of Religious Authority in Islam*, ed. Orkhan Mir-Kasimov (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 277–303.

⁴⁰ On these intellectuals, see Aubin, "Le mécénat timouride a Chiraz."

expositions on the science of letters (*'ilm-i huruf*).⁴¹ Iskandar deployed the presuppositions, vocabulary, and conclusions of these varied intellectual traditions to form a synthesized and coherent claim to sovereignty in the preface to his own astronomical work entitled *Dibacha-yi jami'-i sultani* (*Preface to the Sultanic Compendium*).⁴² In the preface, Iskandar observes that God invested the secrets of terrestrial and celestial dominion within human beings and confirmed their external and internal perfection and fortune through the conjunction of their births with celestial events made intelligible through horoscopes. Moreover, He endowed their bodies as repositories of divine and natural marks, and taught them, in the instance of Adam, to comprehend all of the divine attributes through mastery of which they may rise to the status of God's vicegerent of creation. This vision of man's place in the cosmos draws upon mystical, lettrist, and astrological cosmologies, and, when applied to the question of rule in the world, substantiates Iskandar's claim to possess the mantle of the formal and spiritual caliphate (*khil'at-i khilafat-i suri va ma'navi*).⁴³

Around this same time, historians associated with Iskandar's court further underscored the political implications of the Timurid prince's claim through the composition of at least two historical works that dealt heavily in the themes treated by Iskandar in *Jami'-i sultani*. Mu'in al-Din Natanzi, in an untitled work commonly known as *Iskandar-Anonymous* (*The Synoptic History of Iskandar*),⁴⁴ proclaims his patron's superiority in governance over his uncle Shahrukh and elevates Iskandar's status to that

⁴¹ On astronomical texts produced for Mirza Iskandar, see Soucek, "Eskandar B. 'Omar Šayx B. Timur," 83; Sharif Jurjani and Ni'matullah Vali both produced works on *'ilm-i tawhid* (the science of God's Unity) at Iskandar's invitation, Binbaş, "Timurid Experimentation," 281–90; Matthew Melvin-Koushki speculates that Sa'in al-Din Turka's *Risalat-i huruf* (*Lettrist Epistle*) was produced at the prince's request (Melvin-Koushki, "The Occult Challenge to Messianism and Philosophy in Early Timurid Iran," 253).

⁴² All that remains extant from this work is the preface, which is contained in a single manuscript of Sharaf al-Din 'Alī Yazdī's prose collection (Cambridge University Library Ms. H. (5)), and was published in Sharaf al-Dīn 'Alī Yazdī, *Munsha'āt-i nivishta-yi Sharaf al-Dīn Yazdī*, ed. Īraj Afshār (Tehran: Surayyā, 1388), 207–11; see also Aubin, "Le mécénat timouride a Chiraz"; on the innovative discourse on sovereignty contained in the preface see Binbaş, "Timurid Experimentation," 291–93.

⁴³ Ibid., 291; Yazdī, *Munsha'āt-i nivishta-yi Sharaf al-Dīn Yazdī*, 208–9.

⁴⁴ On his work, see Woods, "The Rise of Tīmūrid Historiography," 89; Evrim Binbaş, "Condominial Sovereignty and Condominial Messianism in the Timurid Empire: Historiographical and Numismatic Evidence," *JESHO* 61 (2018): 178, fn. 12.

of a philosopher-king who had mastered every art and science and surrounded himself with the greatest luminaries of the day.⁴⁵ Mu'in al-Din Natanzi infused his history with potent religiopolitical references and eschatological terminology and argues for Iskandar's rightful claim to rule through the existence of a formal pact (*'ahdnama*) offered by Timur to Iskandar, which modern scholars such as Priscilla Soucek and Evrim Binbaş have viewed as an allusion to the Shi'i concept of *nass*, or an imam's designation of his successor.⁴⁶ Certainly such an interpretation is possible, especially since Natanzi in other places is quite clear on the profoundly unique status of Iskandar, whom he proclaims the messiah of the End Times (*mahdi-yi akhīr-i zaman*).⁴⁷ Over the course of the fifteenth century, the ascription of messianic titles to temporal rulers would become one of the basic features of sovereignty. More immediately, Natanzi's discourse on Iskandar and the other similar claims put forward by the scholarly and historical works produced in Shiraz between 1409 and 1414 had an immediate effect on the wider discourse on sovereignty among other Timurid princes.

In this regard, a similar ideological program developed concurrently within the court of Iskandar's uncle, Shahrukh, who was consolidating his rule in Khurasan during this period. Around the time that Iskandar adopted the title of sultan, Shahrukh's court aspired to similarly grandiose claims. In 1417, the Hanafi jurist, Jalal al-Din Qayini completed a political treatise dedicated to Shahrukh in which he proclaimed his patron the *mujaddid* of the ninth century of the Hijra.⁴⁸ The basis for this attribution rested primarily upon Shahrukh's assumption of power in the beginning of the century and his decision to abrogate the traditions of Chinggis Khan and implement the *shari'a* in full force. Claims of Shahrukh's preeminent status as *mujaddid* and protector of the *shari'a* would become hallmark themes in the early Timurid historiographical tradition as it developed under the aegis of Shahrukh's thirty-year reign. In fact, the two most

⁴⁵ Binbaş, *Intellectual Networks in Timurid Iran*, 89–90; see also Francis Richard, "Un témoignage inexploité concernant le mécénat d'Eskandar Solṭān à Eṣfahān," *Oriente Moderno* n.s. 15 (1996): 45–72.

⁴⁶ Soucek, "Eskandar B.'Omar Ṣayx B. Timur," 76; Binbaş, "Timurid Experimentation," 298.

⁴⁷ Mu'in al-Dīn Naṭanzī, *Muntakhab al-tavārikh-i Mu'īnī, Extraits du Muntakhab al-tavārikh-i mu'īnī (anonyme d'Iskandar)*, ed. Jean Aubin (Tehran: Kitābfurūshī-i Khayyām, 1336), 433; Binbaş, "Timurid Experimentation," 298.

⁴⁸ Subtelny and Khalidov, "The Curriculum of Islamic Higher Learning in Timurid Iran in the Light of the Sunni Revival under Shāh-Rukh," 212, 217–22; Binbaş, 263.

prominent historians of the period – Hafiz-i Abru and Sharaf al-Din Yazdi – both deployed the concept of religious renewal as a prominent aspect of their praise of Shahrukh.⁴⁹

Although Iskandar's claims to the caliphate and Shahrukh's counter claims to religious renewal were clearly fueled by the dynastic rivalry between the two aspirants to Timur's legacy, the adaptation of terminology grounded in Islamic tradition also reflected developments within the socioreligious context of the period, in general and in the first decades of the fifteenth century in particular. Between the dissolution of the Ilkhanid dynasty in the mid-fourteenth century and the rise of the Ottoman, Safavid, Mughal, and Uzbek empires in the early sixteenth century, a significant number of radical pietistic movements sought to transform the political order of the Islamic East. Modern scholarship has understood the prevalence and potency of such movements as constitutive of a Messianic Age, during which time lines between religious and political authority were blurred beyond distinction.⁵⁰ Before the dissolution of the Ilkhanids, political authority in Islamic lands was largely predicated on a theoretical concept of universal kingship – whether Abbasid or Chinggisid – which legitimized claims to rule through a king's preeminent royal genealogical lineage. The absence of suitable candidates with such lineages as a viable political option from the fourteenth century onward heightened the appeal of messianic missions, which were frequently substantiated by a deliverer's claims to spiritual and temporal authority on the basis of direct divine appointment. But even if these appeals rested ultimately on such divine support, messianic messengers also burnished prominent religious and spiritual lineages that bolstered their prestige. Whether as descendants of the Prophet Muhammad (*sayyid*) and 'Ali ibn Abi Talib or as hereditary heirs of renowned Sufi masters, several of the most successful messianic figures of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries enhanced their appeal with reference to prestigious lineages. During this period four messianic figures, Fazlullah Astarabadi, Muhammad Nurbakhsh, Muhammad ibn Falah, and Haydar ibn Junayd all claimed *sayyid* status as they offered their followers radical visions of a new order.⁵¹ This messianic discourse, once it entered the political arena, also became an appealing mode of legitimation for temporal rulers. Since such

⁴⁹ On Hafiz-i Abru, see Woods, *The Aqquyunlu*, 104; on Yazdi, see Binbaş, *Intellectual Networks in Timurid Iran*, 263–64.

⁵⁰ Bashir, *Messianic Hopes and Mystical Visions*, 31.

⁵¹ Arjomand, *The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam*, 66–84.

a discourse offered a powerful alternative to authority based on prestige of royal genealogy, aspects of the messianic message appealed especially to rulers without particularly distinguished royal lineages.

If the 150 years after the dissolution of the Ilkhanids was generally susceptible to a messianic appeal, the decade after Shahrukh's consolidation of power in 1418 was particularly charged with heightened eschatological expectation fueled by radical Sufis and occultists. As discussed in Chapter 1, in 1423, Muhammad Nurbakhsh declared himself the expected *mahdi*, who would usher in a period of peace and justice before the Day of Judgment and rose in a short-lived revolt against Shahrukh.⁵² Although these developments may have alarmed Shahrukh, an assassination attempt in 1427 elicited a much more comprehensive response.⁵³ In the days following the incident, the attempted assassin was connected with the Hurufi movement of Fazlullah Astarabadi, who had been executed at the order of Shahrukh's brother Miranshah in 1394 for innovation in matters of the faith.⁵⁴ The connection of the attempted assassin with a messianic movement sent a shock wave through Shahrukh's court. Indeed, Evrim Binbaş has pointed to this assassination attempt as a watershed moment in the Timurid ruler's reign, as it crystallized the threat posed by the messianic challenge and precipitated a heavy-handed response that led to the expulsion or intimidation of a wide array of Sufis, intellectuals, and occultists.⁵⁵

Yet beyond these policies, the rise in prominence of radical messianic movements may have fueled an ideological response from Shahrukh and the princely courts of his sons. Maria Subtelny has characterized Shahrukh's reign as a period of Sunni revival.⁵⁶ Certainly, many aspects of his

⁵² Ibid., 45.

⁵³ İlker Evrim Binbaş, "The Anatomy of a Regicide Attempt: Shāhrukh, the Hurūfīs, and the Timurid Intellectuals in 830/1426–27," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 23, 3 (2013): 391–428.

⁵⁴ Bashir, *Fazlallah Astarabadi and the Hurufis*, 37–42.

⁵⁵ Binbaş, "Anatomy of a Regicide Attempt," 391–428.

⁵⁶ Maria Subtelny, "The Sunni Revival under Shāh-Rukh and Its Promoters: A Study of the Connection between Ideology and Higher Learning in Iran," in *Proceedings of the 27th Meeting of Haneda Memorial Hall Symposium on Central Asia and Iran, August 30, 1993* (Kyoto: Institute of Inner Asian Studies, 1993): 14–23; Maria Eva Subtelny, "The Cult of 'Abdullah Anṣārī under the Timurids," in *Gott Ist Schön Und Er Liebt Die Schönheit – God Is Beautiful and He Loves Beauty*, eds. Alma Giese and J. Christoph Bürgel (Bern: Peter Lang, 1994), 377–406; Subtelny and Khalidov, "The Curriculum of Islamic Higher Learning"; Subtelny, *Timurids in Transition*, 24–28.

reign seemed to signal a return to *shar'i* policies; his professed abrogation of the Chinggisid *yasa*, implementation of the *shari'a*, and the patronage of Sunni scholars and institutions indicate a shift from his father Timur's policies of proclaiming the preeminence of Chinggisid traditions. However, in many respects, not least in reference to issues of sovereign authority, Shahrukh and his sons continued to deploy an eclectic array of legitimating vocabularies, some of which freely engaged with the political discourses propounded by the radical Sufis and messianic deliverers of the 1420s. To wit, the Timurid family mausoleum in Samarkand, Gur-i Amir, contains two inscriptions that proclaim the family's descent from both Chinggis Khan and 'Ali ibn Abi Talib.⁵⁷ The inscriptions, which were completed after 1425, associates Alan-Qo'a, a purported ancestor of both Chinggis Khan and Timur's Barlas forebears, with the Virgin Mary and openly declares that the divine light by which she miraculously conceived was a descendant of 'Ali.⁵⁸ As John Woods has suggested, this claim, despite its lack of historicity, "manifests a kind of spiritual reality when seen in the context of similar efforts throughout the central Islamic lands to reconcile Mongol and Semitic traditions."⁵⁹ The emphasis of the inscription on a miraculous Timurid descent from 'Ali demonstrates a concerted effort to associate the Timurid house with the most prominent lineage of post-Abbasid Islamic legitimating discourse. In its emphasis on the role of direct divine intervention and association of Timur with 'Ali, the rationale and message of the inscription drew freely upon two of the most fundamental aspects of the messianic challenge posed by men such as Muhammad Nurbakhsh and the Hurufis. Given the broader religiopolitical context in which the cenotaph and its inscription were commissioned, we may perhaps view this example of Timurid legitimating ideology as a response to the messianic revolts of the 1420s.

⁵⁷ These inscriptions were first published in A. A. Semenov, "Nadpisi na nadgrobiyakh Timura i ego potomkov v Gur-i Emire," *Epigrafika Vostoka* 2, 3 (1948): 49–62, (1949): 45–54; and in Turkish translation, A. K. İnan, *Makaleler ve İncelemeler* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1969), 587–610.

⁵⁸ Woods, "Timur's Genealogy," 85–87; Denise Aigle, "Les transformations d'un mythe d'origine : l'exemple de Gengis Khan et de Tamerlan," *Revue des Mondes Musulmans et de la Méditerranée* 89–90 (2000): 151–68; Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign*, 37–39.

⁵⁹ Woods, "Timur's Genealogy," 87.

HISTORICAL WRITING AND THE NEW VOCABULARY
OF SOVEREIGNTY

The dynastic and religious developments of the first decades of the fifteenth century encouraged Timurid discourses on rule that focused upon legitimating strategies that offered alternatives to the Abbasid or Chinggisid dispensations. The concepts that were developed emphasized the role of divine sanction and drew upon a wider religious climate charged with eschatological expectation. In such an environment, the invocation of miraculous and cosmic events became an acceptable and even necessary strategy for substantiating rule. Such strategies also coalesced around several titles, which, although not inventions of the early fifteenth century, took on new significance and eventually wide acceptance in the political discourses of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. In this way, terms such as *sahib-qiran* and *mujaddid*, both of which predate Timurid usage even in a political context, gained broad currency as terms of political rhetoric only with their application and adaptation by Timurid courts in the first decades of the fifteenth century. Certainly, the activities of the hyper-literate scholars, secretaries, and statesmen associated with these courts encouraged their adaptation in ever-wider political contexts. But on another level, this new vocabulary of sovereignty resonated because the ideas for which it stood offered a compelling discourse for rulers to justify and explain their sovereignty in the absence of traditionally accepted legitimating criteria.

THE NEW VOCABULARY

The term *sahib-qiran* initially gained some currency in the panegyric Persian poetry of the eleventh century. Conceptually, *sahib-qiran*, as descriptor of a ruler's attributes, referred to the celestial fortune that he enjoyed through the auspicious coincidence of his birth and a major planetary conjunction. In its concern for the celestial ordination of a ruler, the term and concept likely predate the Islamic period in Middle Persian, but its Arabicized form gained lasting currency in eleventh-century Ghaznavid poetry.⁶⁰ In particular, Mas'ud-i Sa'd-i Salmani and Farrukhi, both

⁶⁰ Chann, "Lord of the Auspicious Conjunction," 94; A. S. Melikian-Chivani, "The Iranian Bazm in Early Persian Sources," in *Banquets d'Orient*, eds. Rika Bernus-Taylor and Bernus-Taylor Bernus-Taylor (Bures-sur-Yvette: Groupe pour l'étude de la civilisation du Moyen-Orient, 1992), 95–118.

renowned poets associated with the Ghaznavid court, occasionally referenced the term in their panegyric poetry.⁶¹ One generation later, the term spread to Seljuk Khurasan and Transoxiana, where Mu'izzi and Suzani frequently referenced *sahib-qiran* in their praise of several Seljuk rulers and governors.⁶² During the twelfth century, use of the term in poetry was not limited to eastern Iran; by the latter half of the century renowned Persian poets in Azerbaijan, such as Khaqani and Nizami, used the term in reference to the Seljuk sultan Tughril II.⁶³

Reference to *sahib-qiran* in the poetry of both eastern and western Iran likely affected the Persian historiographical tradition from at least the beginning of the thirteenth century. Indeed, two historians writing at opposite ends of the Turko-Persian cultural zone at almost the same time deployed the term among the lofty attributes of their respective patrons. One of the historians, Muhammad ibn 'Ali Ravandi (fl. 1207), presented his work *Rahat al-sudur wa ayat al-surur* (*Comfort of Hearts and Wonder of Delights*) to the Seljuk sultan of Rum Kay Khusraw I, upon his accession in 1204.⁶⁴ As the period of his writing corresponded with the rapid dissolution of the Great Seljuks, Ravandi had difficulty finding an appropriate patron once his work was completed. Only after his arrival in Konya and the accession of Kay Khusraw in 1204 did he find a suitable environment in which to present his work and laud his patron as the Lord of the Auspicious Conjunction of every land (*sahib-qiran-i har diyar*).⁶⁵ Like Ravandi, another litterateur Sadr al-Din Hasan Nizami (fl. 1206) only completed his history, *Taj al-ma'asir* (*Crown of Deeds*), after similar

⁶¹ Mas'ud-i Sa'd-i Salmani uses *sahib-qiran* in praise of Sultan Mahmud of Ghazna. See, for example, Mas'ud-i Sa'd Salmānī, *Dīvān*, ed. Rashīd Yāsāmī (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Pīrūz, 1339 [1960]), 4, 36. Farrukhī praises Mahmud's son and heir Mas'ud by the same title (Farrukhī Sīstānī, *Dīvān-i Farrukhī Sīstānī*, ed. Muḥammad Dabīr Siyāqī (Tehran: Iqbal, 1335), 392).

⁶² Dihkhudā, "Šāhib-qirān," *Lughatnāma*.

⁶³ Khaqani uses the term in reference to Abu al-Muzaffar Jalal al-Din Shirvanshah: Khāqānī, *Dīvān Badīl ibn 'Alī Najjār Khāqānī Shirvānī*, ed. Ziyā' al-Dīn Sajjādī (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Zavvār, 1338 [1959]), 32. Nizami uses it in praise of Tughril Arslan in *Khusraw u Shīrīn*: Nizāmī Ganjavī, *Khusraw va Shīrīn*, ed. Ḥusayn Pizhmān Bakhtiyārī (Tehran: Ibn Sīnā, 1343 [1964]), 15.

⁶⁴ For details on Ravandi's biography, see Julie Scott Meisami, *Persian Historiography to the End of the Twelfth Century* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), 237–39; Julie Scott Meisami, "Rāvandī's Rāḥat Al-Ṣudūr: History or Hybrid?," *Edebiyat* 5 (1994): 181–215; Carole Hillenbrand, "Rāvandī, the Seljuk Court at Konya and Persianisation of Anatolian Cities," *Mesogeios (Mediterranean Studies)* 25–26 (2005): 157–69; Riedel, "Searching for the Islamic Episteme," 140–85.

⁶⁵ Abū Bakr Najm al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn 'Alī Rāvandī, *Rāḥat al-ṣudūr wa āyat al-surūr*, ed. Muhammad Iqbal (London: Luzac, 1921), 19.

reversals in the fortunes of his planned patrons. Hasan Nizami was originally from Nishapur, where, according to the fourteenth-century historian Hamd Allah Mustawfi (d. after 1339–40), he was born to the well-renowned author of the *Chahar maqala* (*The Four Discourses*), Nizami ‘Aruzi Samarqandi (d. after 1161).⁶⁶ After departing his hometown to seek literary fame, he eventually arrived in Lahore, where under the patronage of Qutb al-Din Aybeg, viceroy of India for the Ghurid ruler, Mu‘izz al-Din’s, he began a history of the Ghurid conquests of northern India. The untimely deaths of both men before the completion of the work complicated the narrative trajectory of the history, which ends with the consolidation of an independent Sultanate of Delhi under Iltutmish.⁶⁷ Despite the reversals of fortune for Nizami’s patrons, he lauded the lofty status and auspicious role of both Mu‘izz al-Din and Qutb al-Din, the latter of whom he celebrated, in particular, as the Lord of the Auspicious Conjunction of the world (*sahib-qiran-i ‘alam*).⁶⁸

Despite the different geographic and political contexts in which the works were produced, both *Comfort of Hearts* and *Crown of Deeds* share several significant characteristics. Besides the common usage of *sahib-qiran*, both works were patronized by Persianized Turkish courts in newly conquered or recently Islamized lands. In this regard, both texts highlight the role of rulers, who, through the use of the sword, uphold the faith and spread the domains of Islam.⁶⁹ Ravandi exhorts his patron Kay Khusraw to reinvigorate the faith in the central lands of Seljuk rule in response to the corruption that precipitated the decline of the Great Seljuks, while Hasan Nizami emphasizes war against infidels (*jihad* and *ghaza*) as a great duty of a Muslim ruler.⁷⁰ Beyond these thematic similarities, the two works were conceived of as hyperliterate vehicles for patronage. They sought to apply poetry and highly stylized prose to the construction of

⁶⁶ Khaliq Ahmad Nizami, *On History and Historians of Medieval India* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1983), 58; Hamd Allāh Mustawfī Qazvīnī, *Ta’rikh-i guzīda*, eds. Edward Granville Browne and Reynold Alleyne Nicholson (Leiden: Brill, 1910), 826.

⁶⁷ On the political background and reversals of this period, Peter A. Jackson, *The Delhi Sultanate: A Political and Military History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 13; on the challenges that such setbacks posed to Hasan Nizami’s historical project, see Nizami, *On History and Historians of Medieval India*, 59–60.

⁶⁸ Ḥasan Nizāmī, *Tāj al-ma‘āsir*, SK Ms. Ayasofya 2991, 8b.

⁶⁹ For discussion of this point with respect to *Comfort of Hearts*, see Meisami, *Persian Historiography*, 240.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 241; Rāvandī, *Rāḥat al-ṣudūr wa āyat al-surūr*, 38; Ḥasan Nizāmī, *Tāj-i Ma‘āsir*, SK Ms. Ayasofya 2991, 7b.

didactic historical narratives.⁷¹ As such, they both draw heavily upon the most celebrated Persian poets of their own day and the preceding generations. Because of this self-conscious and highly stylized approach to prose, the two works also received a fair amount of criticism on their literary merits from scholars in the twentieth century.⁷² And yet, between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries, the works were held in some esteem. *Comfort of Hearts* was translated into Turkish in the fifteenth century at the request of the Ottoman sultan Murad II and preserved in the library of his grandson, Bayezid II, while *Crown of Deeds* was likewise held in Bayezid's collection and, more generally, served as a model of fine prose writing for secretaries and other litterateurs into the sixteenth century.⁷³

Perhaps not surprisingly then, the term *sahib-qiran* remained an occasional reference in the chancery-style histories written under the patronage of the Ilkhanids in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Three of the most prominent historians of this period – Juvayni (d. 1283), Rashid al-Din (d. 1318), and Vassaf (d. 1229–30) – all include a few isolated references to the term in relation to a Chinggisid ruler. In contrast to the previous usage of the term by Ravandi and Hasan Nizami, the Ilkhanid historians' deployment of *sahib-qiran* implied not only a sign of God's favor for the Chinggisid rulers, but also an indication of the peace and justice that their reigns ensured. In this regard, Juvayni referred to the concept in the concluding remarks on his chapter of the deeds and actions of Ögedei Khan. After recounting fifty anecdotes that demonstrate the khan's justice and generosity, Juvayni concludes:

⁷¹ For a discussion of the features of this chancery style of historical writing, see Chapter 5.

⁷² Rāvandī, *Rāḥat al-ṣudūr wa āyat al-surūr*, xii–xiii; Zāhir al-Dīn Nīshāpūrī and Ismāʿīl Afshār, *Saljūqnāma* (Tīhrān: Khāvar, 1332), 5–8; Julie Scott Meisami discusses the criticisms of Iqbāl and Afshār, Meisami, *Persian Historiography to the End of the Twelfth Century*, 238; Hasan Nizami, *Taj Ul Ma'athir = The Crown of Glorious Deeds*, eds. M. Aslam Khan and Chander Shekhar, trans. Bhagwat Saroop (Delhi: Saud Ahmad Dehlavi, 1998), xiii–xvii; Muḥammad Taqī Bahār, *Sabk'shināsī: yā tārikh-i taṭavvur-i naṣr-i Fārsī, barāya tadrīs dar dānishkadāh va dawrah-i dukturī-i adābiyāt* (Tehran: Chāp-khāna-yi khūdkār, 1321), 3:109–11.

⁷³ For the Turkish translation, see Yazıcızāde 'Alī. *Tevārīḫ-i āl-i Selcuk*, TSMK Ms. Revan 1391; the unique manuscript of *Comfort of Hearts* contains Bayezid II's seal (Rāvandī, *Rāḥat al-ṣudūr wa āyat al-surūr*, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Supp. Pers. 1314, 1a, 179a); Riedel, "Searching for the Islamic Episteme," 82; for Bayezid II's seal on *Crown of Deeds*, see Ms. Ayasofya 2991, 1a; Storey counts fourteen extant copies of *Crown of Deeds* copied between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries (C. A. (Charles Ambrose) Storey, *Persian Literature: A Bio-Bibliographical Survey* (London: Luzac, 1927), 1:494).

We have described something of that which the Necessarily Existent caused to be present in his nature in the way of clemency, forgiveness, justice, generosity and the teachings of the religion of God; and this we have done that it may be known that in every age there is a Lord of the Conjunction.⁷⁴

Whereas Juvayni's handling of the term emphasizes the generosity of the khan, Rashid al-Din refers to the term in the introduction to his history both as one of the royal epithets for his patron, Öljeitü Khan (Sultan Muhammad Khudabanda), and as a signifier of the peace that his accession assured. Since, according to Rashid al-Din, such a peaceful transition has never occurred before, it is a sign that Öljeitü is the most auspicious ruler to assume the throne since the time of Adam.⁷⁵ Vassaf, too, acknowledges the recurring auspicious aspect of the concept, but emphasizes its bestowal upon a ruler as a clear sign of God's favor. In Vassaf's narrative, the adaptation of the term by the Ilkhanid emperor Arghun (d. 1291) occurs at the suggestion of his vizier, Sa'd al-Dawla.⁷⁶ Vassaf relates that Sa'd al-Dawla suggested to Arghun that the khan had inherited the status of prophet through his Chinggisid lineage. To lend credence to this belief, the vizier circulated a document among the Muslim scholars and learned men of the court requesting their acknowledgement of Arghun's status as the Lord of the Auspicious Conjunction who is sent by God in every age to set right the affairs of the world "and, in accordance with the requisites of the time and for the good of humankind, reveals the custom of a sacred law and the basis of a ritual observance."⁷⁷ This notion of *sahib-qiran* as a cyclically manifested and divinely appointed reformer brought the concept in line with similar Islamic conceptions of religious renewal (*tajdid*).

⁷⁴ Translation by J. A. Boyle, 'Alā' al-Dīn 'Aṭā Malik Juvaynī, *Genghis Khan: The History of the World Conqueror* (Manchester: Manchester University Press; Paris, 1997), 234; 'Alā' al-Dīn 'Aṭā Malik Juvaynī, *Ta'rikh-i jahān-gushāy* (London: Luzac, 1912), 1:168.

⁷⁵ Rashid al-Dīn Faḡl Allāh Hamadānī, *Rashiduddin Fazlullah's Jami'u't-Tawarikh = Compendium of Chronicles: A History of the Mongols*, trans. W. M. Thackston (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, Dept. of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, 1998), 5; Rashid al-Dīn Faḡl Allāh Hamadānī, *Jāmi' al-tavārikh*, eds. Muḥammad Rawshan and Muṣṭafā Mūsavi (Tehran: Nashr-i Alburz, 1373), 5.

⁷⁶ Jean Aubin, *Emirs mongols et vizirs persans dans les remous de l'acculturation* (Paris: Association pour l'avancement des études iraniennes, 1995), 43.

⁷⁷ 'Abd Allāh ibn Faḡl Allāh Vaṣṣāf al-Ḥaḡrat, *Kitāb-i Vaṣṣāf al-Ḥaḡrat*, ed. Muḥammad Mahdī. Iṣfahānī (Bombay, 1269 [1852–53]), 241; Aubin, *Emirs mongols et vizirs persans dans les remous de l'acculturation*, 43; Anne F. Broadbridge, *Kingship and Ideology in the Islamic and Mongol Worlds*, Cambridge Studies in Islamic Civilization (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 44.

Even if the term *sahib-qiran* enjoyed an extensive history in the poetry and historical writing that preceded Timur, such references to the concept in association with a ruler were generally infrequent and unevenly applied. In contrast, in the generation following Timur's death, the term was used so frequently in reference to him as to become his exclusive epithet. Indeed, beginning with Nizam al-Din Shami, Timurid historians, when mentioning the conqueror's actions or deeds, simply referred to the ruler as *Amir-i Sahib-qiran*.⁷⁸ Beyond its usage simply as a title, historians working under Shahrukh, especially Sharaf al-Din Yazdi, also explicated the astrological dimensions of Timur's auspicious life. In the beginning of his history, Yazdi includes a lengthy digression following his narration of Timur's birth, in which he examines Timur's horoscope to substantiate the notion that through his reign, "the bases of the structure of the felicity of that line were firmly fixed to the pillars of the Lord of the Auspicious Conjunction until the End of Time."⁷⁹ In contrast to most previous discussions of a ruler's status as *sahib-qiran*, Yazdi's discourse seeks to substantiate the association of the title Lord of Conjunction with the particular birth and subsequent career of Timur through its specific and detailed analysis of conjunction astrology. This approach clearly influenced Bidlisi, for when he took up the task of substantiating his use of titles for Bayezid II, he also sought to undergird the legitimating claims that he advanced through detailed scholarly considerations of their epistemological underpinnings.⁸⁰

The other legitimating term that gained currency during this period also emphasized the cyclical nature of cosmically or divinely appointed rulers. The title *mujaddid* refers to the individual sent by God every century to renew the bases of Muslim faith. In contrast to the concept of a *sahib-qiran*, the conceptual basis of which was derived from celestial events, the concept of cyclical renewal was firmly grounded in the canonical traditions of the Prophet Muhammad (*hadith*). As such, the first prophetic tradition that Abu Dawud al-Sijistani includes in the *Kitab al-malahim* (book on battles, often of a prophetic nature) of his canonical *hadith* collection records: "God will send to this community at the turn of every century someone who will restore for it matters of

⁷⁸ Shāmī. Nizām al-Dīn, *Histoire des conquêtes de Tamerlan*.

⁷⁹ Elena A. Poliakova, "Timur as Described by the 15th Century Court Historiographers," *Iranian Studies* 21, 1/2 (1988): 37.

⁸⁰ For a discussion of Bidlisi's use of astrological doctrines in his discourses on kingship, see Chapter 6.

faith.”⁸¹ Although the tradition may have been associated initially with the eschatological expectations of the Muslim community – and certainly Abu Dawud’s inclusion of the tradition among other similarly apocalyptic traditions suggests as much – from at least the third Hijri century, the tradition became strongly connected with certain exceptional scholars whose work was judged to have renewed the bases of faith among Muslims. Ella Landau-Tasseron has identified the frequent early use of the tradition among Shafi’i scholars and suggested that the strong correspondence between these scholars and the concept of cyclical renewal stemmed from the early efforts of al-Shafi’i’s students to legitimize their teacher’s views and solidify his legacy.⁸² Regardless of whether such a strategy was actively pursued, the title *mujaddid* was closely associated with Shafi’i scholars before the fifteenth century, yet frequently remained a personal and narrowly construed title of reverence used within small scholarly circles to honor exceptional men of learning.

Even if the tradition was closely associated with renowned Shafi’i scholars, the concept of cyclical renewal was never completely divorced from eschatological overtones. In the latter half of the fourteenth century, at least two scholars implicitly or explicitly highlighted the apocalyptic aspect of the tradition. On an implicit level, Ibn al-Kathir pointed to this aspect of the tradition when he included the *hadith* immediately preceding two other traditions on the signs of the End Time (*ashrat al-sa’a*) in *Nihayat al-bidaya wa’l-nihaya* (*The End of the Beginning and the End*).⁸³ More explicitly, Zayn al-Din al-‘Iraqi (d. 1404) suggested that God’s appointment of a *mujaddid* was, in fact, a means of postponing the End Time.⁸⁴ In the fifteenth century, intellectual speculations that conflated the *mujaddid* in this century and the arrival of the expected *mahdi* abounded. Indeed, a wide swath of Muslim scholars, including lettrists, such as ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Bistami, and traditional *hadith* scholars, such as Shams al-Din Muhammad al-Sakhawi, anticipated the coming Hour at the end of the ninth Hijri century and firmly tied the tradition of renewal to this heightened eschatological

⁸¹ Abū Dā’ūd Sulaymān al-Sijistānī and Muḥammad Muḥyī al-Dīn ‘Abd Allāh al-Ḥamīd, *Sunan Abī Dā’ūd* (Cairo: Maṭba‘a Muṣṭafā Muḥammad, 1354), 4:109 (no. 4291).

⁸² *Ibid.*, 99–113.

⁸³ Ismā‘īl ibn ‘Umar Ibn Kathīr, *Nihāyat al-Bidāyah wa-al-nihāyah fī al-fitan wa-al-malāḥim*, ed. Muḥammad Fahīm ‘Abīyah (Riyadh: Maktabat al-Naṣr, 1968), 1:30–31.

⁸⁴ Ella Landau-Tasseron, “The ‘Cyclical Reform’: A Study of the Mujaddid Tradition,” *Studia Islamica* 70 (1989): 79–117, 80.

expectation.⁸⁵ This apocalyptic foreboding reached such a fervor in the latter fifteenth century that the renowned Egyptian scholar Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti wrote a treatise beseeching God to confirm him as *mujaddid* in the ninth Hijri century and issued several religious opinions refuting the impending Day of Judgment.⁸⁶

As with the earliest usages of *sahib-qiran* in a political context, the eschatological overtones that would become so important in the fifteenth century were largely absent in the earliest political reference to renewal as a legitimating concept. Moreover, not surprisingly, as with *sahib-qiran*, renewal as a political discursive element emerged from literary court panegyrics in the fourteenth century. In Ilkhanid Iran, Rashid al-Din experimented with the ideological potential of the *hadith* on renewal. Yet, in these instances the Ilkhanid rulers are acclaimed as strengtheners (*muqawwi*) of the faith and not renewers.⁸⁷ In contrast to the title *sahib-qiran*, early usage of *mujaddid* in a political context occurred within the fourteenth-century court of the Mamluk Sultanate. Although Mamluk sultans traditionally defined their sovereignty in relation to an Abbasid caliph appointed by the sultan, court circles in Syria and Egypt were not immune to the alternative legitimating strategies advanced by Persian literati courtiers after the advent of the Mongols in the thirteenth century. Indeed, even Sultan Baybars, the first Mamluk sultan to consolidate power effectively, borrowed from contemporary Persian political discourse. In fact, the title *sahib-qiran* appears prominently in at least two places among the inscriptions that Baybars ordered be made on the citadel in Damascus.⁸⁸ Such political experimentation within the Mamluk court continued into the middle of the fourteenth century, when the descendants of the Mamluk sultan Qalawun endeavored to establish a dynasty and

⁸⁵ Abd al-Rahmān al-Bisṭāmī, *Naẓm al-sulūk fī musāmarat al-mulūk*, TSMK Ms. III. Ahmet 1597, 267a–71a; on al-Sakhawī, see Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Rahmān al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ma-qāṣid al-ḥasanah fī bayān kathīr min al-aḥādīth al-mushtahirah ‘ala al-alsinah*, eds. ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad Ṣiddīq and ‘Abd al-Wahhāb ‘Abd al-Laṭīf (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyah, 1979), 122.

⁸⁶ Jalāl al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Rahmān al-Suyūṭī, *al-Ḥāwī lil-fatāwī fī al-fiqh wa-‘ulūm al-tafsīr wa-al-ḥadīth wa-al-uṣūl wa-al-naḥw wa-al-i‘rāb wa-sā’ir al-funūn*, ed. ‘Abd al-Laṭīf Ḥasan (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyah, 2000), 2:86; for al-Suyuti’s comments on the expected *mahdī* and the express hope that he be considered the *mujaddid* of the ninth century, see E. M. Sartain, *Jalāl Al-Dīn Al-Suyūṭī: Biography and Background* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 2:227; Landau-Tasseron, “The ‘Cyclical Reform,’” 87.

⁸⁷ Brack, “Mediating Sacred Kingship,” 205–10.

⁸⁸ Denise Aigle, “Les Inscriptions de Baybars Dans Le Bilād Al-Šām. Une Expression de La Légitimité Du Pouvoir,” *Studia Islamica* 97 (2003): 73.

fashion a basis for rule that could combat effectively the ambitions of powerful Mamluk commanders.⁸⁹

In this environment, Ibrahim ibn 'Abd al-Rahman ibn al-Qaysarani, a chancery official of the Mamluk court in Cairo, celebrated the accession of the Qalawunid sultan al-Malik al-Salih in 1342 through a panegyric epistle in Arabic that he presented in the following year, in which he proclaimed the new sultan *mujaddid* and sought to substantiate this claim with reference to the full range of rhetorical technique.⁹⁰ Ibn al-Qaysarani's epistle was clearly intended as a vehicle for patronage as much as an instrument of legitimation of Qalawunid rule. Indeed, both these objectives are evident throughout the work; Ibn al-Qaysarani points both to his forebears, who served as prominent Ayyubid and Mamluk administrative functionaries, as well as to the elements of divine sanction and fortunate lineage that substantiate al-Malik al-Salih's authority.⁹¹ Foremost among such legitimating elements is the concept of renewal (*tajdid*), the elaboration and substantiation of which occupy three-quarters of the entire treatise.⁹² Although Ibn al-Qaysarani directly references the prophetic tradition in several places in the work, his conception of *mujaddid* differs markedly from previous scholarly considerations.⁹³ Most significantly, al-Malik al-Salih's birth in 1320 and accession in 1342 presented a chronological difficulty in applying a title dependent upon centennial calendrical turns. To address this challenge, he uncoupled the original prophetic tradition

⁸⁹ On the reign of Qalawun's son and most successful heir, al-Nasir Muhammad, see Amalia Levanoni, *A Turning Point in Mamluk History: The Third Reign of Al-Nāṣir Muḥammad Ibn Qalāwūn (1310–1341)* (Leiden: Brill, 1995); for two different views on the period after al-Nasir Muhammad's reign, see Frédéric Bauden, "The Sons of Al-Nāṣir Muḥammad and the Politics of Puppets: Where Did It All Start?," *Mamluk Studies Review* 8, 1 (2009): 53–81; J. Van Steenbergen, *Order out of Chaos: Patronage, Conflict, and Mamluk Socio-Political Culture, 1341–1382* (Leiden: Brill, 2006).

⁹⁰ P. M. Holt, "Literary Offerings: A Genre of Courtly Literature," in *The Mamluks in Egyptian Politics and Society*, eds. Thomas Philipp and Ulrich Haarmann (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 3–16; on its ideological message and use as a vehicle for professional advancement, see J. Van Steenbergen, "Qalāwūnid Discourse, Elite Communication and the Mamluk Cultural Matrix: Interpreting a 14th-Century Panegyric," *Journal of Arabic Literature* 43 (2012): 1–28.

⁹¹ Ibrāhīm ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Qaysarānī and 'Umar 'Abd al-Salām Tadmurī, *al-Nūr al-lā'ih wa-al-durr al-ṣādih fī iṣṭifā Mawlānā al-Sultān al-malik al-Sālih (Abū al-Fidā 'Imād al-Dīn Ismā'il ibn al-Nāṣir Muḥammad ibn al-Manṣūr Qalāwūn, 743–746H, 1342–1345M)* (Trablus: Dār al-Inshā lil-Ṣiḥāfah wa-al-Ṭibā'ah wa-al-Nashr, 1982), 11–12.

⁹² Van Steenbergen, "Qalāwūnid Discourse," 10.

⁹³ Specifically, al-Qaysarani states: "It became known through his justice and virtue that he is the one sent to this community at the turn of this century to renew its faith," al-Qaysarānī, *al-Nūr al-lā'ih*, 50.

from the Islamic calendar and applied it to the period of Mamluk rule in Egypt, which began in the middle of the thirteenth century. With this rationale, he cited the foundation of Mamluk rule in 1245 and noted that al-Malik al-Salih acceded the throne one hundred lunar years later.⁹⁴ Although Ibn al-Qaysarani's adaptation of the *mujaddid* tradition represents an anomaly within the Mamluk context until the reign of Sultan Qansawh al-Ghawri in the early sixteenth century, his work anticipated the fifteenth-century development of the term in a Timurid context in at least two ways. Most significantly, Ibn al-Qaysarani demonstrated the suitability of applying the *mujaddid* tradition to a political personage. More provocatively, he offered an innovative exegesis of the tradition that justified its application to a ruler whose birth, life, and rule unfolded entirely within the middle decades of a single Hijri century. Both efforts were well suited to the abilities and inclinations of a chancery functionary. On one hand, they frequently had the broad learning in religious, astrological, and mystical sciences to draw creatively upon the salient elements of those traditions that might bolster a king's claim to cosmically or divinely ordained rule. On the other hand, the dictates of the patronage environment in which they wrote tolerated and even encouraged creative interpretations and innovative applications of these traditions in an encomiastic literary form.

Early Timurid usage of *mujaddid* likely developed independently of Ibn al-Qaysarani's treatise. The title was most prominently associated with Timur's son and eventual successor Shahrukh from the second decade of the fifteenth century. In the context of his rivalry with his nephew Iskandar, the development of this title likely offered an appealing legitimating strategy at a time when Shahrukh still contended with rival claimants to sovereign authority. The first proponent of Shahrukh as *mujaddid* was Jalal al-Din Qayini (d. 1434–35), who substantiated his attribution with reference to Shahrukh's abrogation of Chinggisid dynastic tradition and the reintroduction of the *shari'a*.⁹⁵ Despite these laudable policies, the Hanafi scholar faced a more fundamental challenge in his claim. Like al-Malik al-Salih, Shahrukh had not accomplished anything of note before the turn of the ninth Hijri century. Claims to renewal ran counter to most traditional approaches to identifying renewers, whose activities should precipitate religious renewal before the turn of a century. Qayini accommodated such concerns with the suggestion that since the Prophet

⁹⁴ Ibid., 53–55; Van Steenberg, "Qalāwūnid Discourse," 11.

⁹⁵ Binbaş, *Intellectual Networks in Timurid Iran*, 263.

Muhammad died eleven years after the start of the Hijri calendar, centennial renewers are sent one hundred years from the Prophet's death.⁹⁶ As such, Shahrukh's independent reign, which, according to Qayini began in 1408–9, before the end of the eighth Hijri century, signified a chronologically and religiously appropriate marker of the Timurid ruler's status as the renewer of the eighth century. In the 1420s, Hafiz-i Abru and Sharaf al-Din Yazdi both further popularized this claim with references to Shahrukh as *mujaddid* in their historical works.⁹⁷ Yazdi, in particular, strengthened the relationship between renewal and astrology by introducing the prophetic tradition and Shahrukh's claim to the title *mujaddid* immediately on the heels of his lengthy analysis of Shahrukh's horoscope. Such a creative association parallels Ibn al-Qaysarani's analysis of renewal in the Mamluk context and further underscores the malleability of epistemological frameworks and scholarly traditions within encomiastic literary works. Yazdi's connection between *mujaddid* and astrology also highlights the similarities between the concepts of *sahib-qiran* and *mujaddid*. Indeed, this tendency to reference and combine legitimating elements from conjunction astrology and prophetic tradition would become an important component of Bidlisi's discourse on Sultan Bayezid II in the early sixteenth century.

THE MOVEMENT OF IDEAS IN THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY

The development of an innovative vocabulary of sovereignty in the early Timurid context of the fifteenth century did not in and of itself necessitate its spread throughout the central lands of Islam. On one level, polities throughout central and western Asia incorporated these legitimating elements and innovative vocabularies into their own ideological programs because the ideas that undergirded them resonated deeply. We may interpret such resonance as a response to the general crisis of rule faced by Muslim polities after Abbasid and Chinggisid lineages ceased to serve as viable political options from the middle of the fourteenth century. In this sense, the movement of political ideas – from a Timurid context that effectively engaged these concerns – addressed a fundamental anxiety shared by all of the major political powers in the central lands of Islam in the fifteenth century. The development of notions of rule divorced from

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Woods, *The Aqquyunlu*, 104–5; Binbaş, *Intellectual Networks in Timurid Iran*, 264.

juridical or genealogical considerations and grounded in alternative epistemological discourses offered a powerful new mode of legitimation to which any successful ruler could theoretically lay claim. Yet the spread of this approach to sovereignty did not unfold as a consequence of the abstract and amorphous operation of a climate of ideas. Rather, the social and cultural landscape of the Islamicate ecumene created specific conditions under which people and ideas freely and effectively circulated. In large measure, we may trace the spread of a Timurid vocabulary of sovereignty by following the movement of chancery officials and their works – letters, epistles, panegyrics, and chronicles – from one court to the next over the course of the fifteenth century.

The movement of written works in the fifteenth century is powerfully illustrated by the lasting popularity and relevance of Hasan Nizami's *Crown of Deeds* in temporal and geographic settings far removed from its time and place of origin in early thirteenth-century northern India. Although largely dismissed by twentieth-century critics as a second-rate literary work of little historical value, *Crown of Deeds* was carefully studied and held in high regard throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Of the extant copies of the work, at least fourteen were produced before 1500.⁹⁸ The work was held in particular esteem within Ottoman court circles during the reign of Bayezid II. A palace library inventory from 1502–3 records seven partial or complete copies of Nizami's work,⁹⁹ at least one of which was produced in the fourteenth century.¹⁰⁰ Clearly, *Crown of Deeds* was read as a model of fine poetry and prose, as evidenced by the significant marginal notes in one of the palace copies of the work.¹⁰¹ The popularity of *Crown of Deeds* also extended beyond the confines of the palace. Upon the death of Mü'eyyedzade 'Abdurrahman in 1516, the Ottoman royal council ordered two scholars in Istanbul to gather the deceased judge's personal books and compile an inventory.¹⁰² Here too, the thirteenth-century history of Islamic conquests in North India appeared among the religious texts, chronicles, and collections of poetry gathered by one of the preeminent scholars and cultural

⁹⁸ Storey, *Persian Literature*, 1:494.

⁹⁹ Török F59, 88b.

¹⁰⁰ SK Ms. Ayasofya 2991 is a copy of *Taj al-ma'asir* produced in 1349. The manuscript includes the seal of Bayezid II on 1a. SK Ms. Fatih 4204 is a fifteenth-century copy of the work, although it does not bear Bayezid's seal.

¹⁰¹ Nizāmī, *Taj al-ma'āsir*, Ms. Ayasofya 2991.

¹⁰² TSMA D. 9291/2, 10b.

tastemakers of early sixteenth-century Ottoman lands.¹⁰³ Later in the sixteenth century, the work became a touchstone for Sehi Beğ, who used Nizami's accomplishment in *Crown of Deeds* as a barometer against which he measured the quality of Celalzade Mustafa's historical writing.¹⁰⁴

While it is clear that the work was copied and preserved in this context as a model of fine Persian prose and poetry, in its subject matter and vocabulary, *Crown of Deeds* offered its Ottoman readers of the late fifteenth century an array of images, arguments, and terminology that appealed to their political and ideological sensibilities. Although separated by time and space, the geopolitical landscape that Hasan Nizami described in reference to the Gangetic Plain in the early thirteenth century mirrored in many ways the Ottoman geopolitical landscape of the Balkans in the late fifteenth century. Both regions were newly conquered and scarcely Islamized. In this sense the language and rhetorical technique that Nizami used to describe and laud the conquests of his patrons likely resonated for fifteenth-century Ottoman readers of *Crown of Deeds* almost three centuries later, when they were themselves engaged in projects of describing and celebrating Ottoman expansion into Christian kingdoms.¹⁰⁵ The rhetorical categories of *jihad* and *ghaza* exist prominently in both *Crown of Deeds* and fifteenth-century Ottoman works.¹⁰⁶ Parallels may also be drawn between the recurring rhetorical images deployed by Ottoman texts and *Crown of Deeds* alike.¹⁰⁷ Given the popularity of the work in Ottoman lands, there is a distinct possibility that the titles and epithets utilized by Hasan Nizami, including *sahib-qiran*, were a source of inspiration for authors at the Ottoman court as they endeavored to celebrate the achievements of the Ottoman sultans in suitable terms.

In addition to the transportation and copying of written works, ideas on sovereignty also frequently circulated through diplomatic and private

¹⁰³ Ibid., 10a.

¹⁰⁴ Sehi Beğ, *Heşt Bihişt*, 136.

¹⁰⁵ For a comparative study of *ghaza* in the context of the Balkans and South Asia, see Ali Anooshahr, *The Ghazi Sultans and the Frontiers of Islam: A Comparative Study of the Late Medieval and Early Modern Periods* (London: Routledge, 2009).

¹⁰⁶ Hasan Nizami introduces the principal heroes of his narrative with a discussion of the significance of *jihad* (Ḥasan Nizāmī, *Tāj al-ma'āsir*, Ms. Ayasofya 2991, 7b); for discussions of *ghaza* and *jihad* within the context of an Ottoman legitimating program, see Imber, "The Ottoman Dynastic Myth"; Darling, "Reformulating the Gazi Narrative."

¹⁰⁷ One of the recurring tropes in *Crown of Deeds* and Ottoman histories concerns the conversion of the temples/churches of unbelievers to mosques (Ḥasan Nizāmī, *Tāj al-ma'āsir*, Ms. Ayasofya 2991, 12b).

correspondence between courts in the fifteenth century. Concurrent with the development of new concepts of kingship, rulers incorporated elements of the new vocabulary of sovereignty into the formal titulature that they deployed in their own description and in the courteous epithets that they extended to their neighbors and allies. Such correspondence became a site for imperial competition between rulers, especially during periods of political tension or outright hostility.¹⁰⁸ In these circumstances, the manipulation of the formal hierarchies of status dictated by diplomatic convention offered chancery officials rich material by which they undermined the status of their sultan's rival. Yet, during peaceful periods, rulers extended to their neighbors every courtesy available through application of the loftiest and most prestigious titles and epithets conceivable. It is in this context of diplomatic exchange that the new vocabulary of sovereignty, including titles such as *mujaddid* and *sahib-qiran*, joins the well-established lexicon of the most frequently used titles and epithets.

In his capacity as a chancery official of the Aqqyunlu court of Ya'qub, Bidlisi participated in this diplomatic phenomenon and helped introduce the new usage of *mujaddid* to the Ottoman court in the 1480s. As mentioned in Chapter 1, Bidlisi, in his capacity as a chancery functionary at the Aqqyunlu court, penned Ya'qub's reply to the Ottoman victory proclamation after the successful sieges of Kili and Akkirman. Certainly, at the time of Bidlisi's composition of the letter, Ottoman scholars were conversant in the discourse on centennial renewal. Indeed, 'Abd al-Rahman al-Bistami, a scholar living in mid-fifteenth-century Ottoman Bursa, prominently featured the doctrine of centennial renewal in his apocalyptic calculations that anticipated the coming Day of Judgment in the ninth Hijri century and associated the renewer of this century with the expected *mahdi*.¹⁰⁹ Yet in contrast to the Aqqyunlu context, in Ottoman lands the doctrine of renewal was mostly limited to scholars outside the court.¹¹⁰ This Ottoman context for the concept differed markedly from contemporary political culture within Aqqyunlu domains. There, despite the chronological difficulties of attributing the title to any individual in the

¹⁰⁸ Muslu, *The Ottomans and the Mamluks*, 19, 28–36, 180–86; Melvin-Koushki, “The Delicate Art of Aggression,”.

¹⁰⁹ Fleischer, “Ancient Wisdom and New Science,” 235.

¹¹⁰ Al-Bistami's ideas became more popular and widespread within Ottoman court circles in the sixteenth century (*ibid.*, 238).

middle of a Hijri century, a number of scholars and court officials began to celebrate Uzun Hasan and his son and ultimate successor, Ya'qub, as renewers of the faith in the ninth Hijri century. Such scholars included Bidlisi's eminent teacher, Jalal al-Din Davani – who lauded Uzun Hasan as the “the envoy of the ninth century” in 1476 – and the historian and chancery colleague of Bidlisi, Fazlullah Khunji-Isfahani, who celebrated both Uzun Hasan and Ya'qub as renewers.¹¹¹ In this environment, it is little wonder that in the reign of Ya'qub, during a period of amicable relations between the Ottomans and Aqquyunlu, Bidlisi deemed it appropriate to celebrate Bayezid II in a letter to the Ottomans as “the renewer (*mujaddid*) of the foundations of Islam and the constructor of the institutions of the faith.”¹¹²

These innovative titles utilized in new contexts also circulated via the flow of personal letters. On occasion, royal personages aided the circulation of novel epithets from one court to another through their private correspondence. For instance, in the aftermath of the Ottoman victory over Aqquyunlu forces at Otlukbeli in 1473, Ruqaya Sultan, an Aqquyunlu princess and the wife of the Timurid prince Sidi Ahmad ibn Miranshah, beseeched Sultan Mehmed for the release of her two sons, who had been captured in the aftermath of the battle. In this context, it is significant that Ruqaya Sultan applied the title most closely associated with Timur, *sahib-qiran*, to the Ottoman sultan. Despite her sons' lineage from the great conqueror, their difficult predicament and the expediency of applying this prominent epithet to her sons' captor trumped any reservations regarding the exclusive application of the title for her sons' great-grandfather.¹¹³

Similarly, these titles circulated through correspondence between scholars and sultans. As part of the patronage networks that overlaid royal and intellectual circles across Islamic West Asia, scholars from distant lands frequently presented literary and scholarly works to sultans at distant courts, who acknowledged their offerings and occasionally encouraged the permanent resettlement of prominent men of learning within their own domains. In some instances, literary gifts conveyed the innovative Timurid titlature to an Ottoman context. For instance, one of the presentation copies of the compendium of Jami's works proclaims Sultan

¹¹¹ Woods, *The Aqquyunlu*, 104–5; Davānī, “‘Arżnāma,” 3; Khunjī-Isfahānī, *Tārīkh-i ‘ālam-ārā-yi amīnī*, 164.

¹¹² Idrīs Bidlīsī, *HB*, 537a.

¹¹³ Ferīdūn Beğ, *Münşe'ātü's-selāṭīn*, 1:288.

Bayezid II as *sahib-qiran*.¹¹⁴ Similarly, the exchange of letters, which accompanied literary presentations and invitations to resettle, also constituted a locus for the flow of innovative titles across wide expanses. One such letter written by Ahmad Taftazani, Hanafi judge of Herat and descendent of the great fourteenth-century scholar Sa'd al-Din Taftazani, was sent to Bayezid II in 1506 and illustrates both the phenomenon of scholarly mobility and the application of the new vocabulary of sovereignty to an Ottoman sultan from a distant scholarly admirer. The letter explains the progress of one of the judge's students from Ottoman lands and his request that the student receive a warm welcome upon his return. Taftazani couches his request within an elaborate letter that offers a long list of Bayezid's titles and epithets, including the prominent usage of *sahib-qiran*.¹¹⁵

Yet if the circulation of written material in the fifteenth century offered diverse courts exposure to the innovative lexicon of kingship that had emerged in Timurid lands, the movement of scholars and statesmen who were completely conversant in the new discourse facilitated the thorough adaptation of the vocabulary in new political contexts. On one level, continued cultural cohesion within the Islamicate ecumene enabled the efficient movement and settlement of scholars. On another, political volatility in the fifteenth century perhaps accelerated the process.¹¹⁶ The rapid expansion of ascendant sultanates, such as the Ottomans after 1453 and the Aqqyunlu after 1467, fueled a desire on the part of these polities to attract and incorporate within their administrative ranks skilled chancery officials and secretaries, many of whom developed their rhetorical repertoire in courts that had adapted the Timurid vocabulary of sovereignty.

Uzun Hasan's great conquests of 1467–69 of central and eastern Iran thoroughly illustrate the enthusiasm with which expanding powers sought to augment their administrative corps with the recruitment of personnel from their defeated adversaries. The effects of these swift victories on the administrative apparatus of the Aqqyunlu Sultanate were significant; within two years Uzun Hasan had transformed his polity from a sultanate on the periphery of the Iranian political landscape to one of the foremost powers in West Asia. This great geographic expansion necessitated

¹¹⁴ The manuscript in question is an extravagantly produced presentation copy, perhaps completed with the support of Sultan-Husayn Bayqara in Herat (*Kulliyat-i Jāmī*, SK Ms. Fatih 4045, 1a).

¹¹⁵ Ferīdūn Beğ, *Münşe'ātü's-selāṭīn*, 1:364–65.

¹¹⁶ Sohrweide, "Dichter Und Gelehrte"; Ertuğrul Ökten, "Scholars and Mobility: A Preliminary Assessment from the Perspective of al-Shaqāyiq al-Nu`māniyya," *Journal of Ottoman Studies* 41 (2013): 55–70.

significant administrative augmentation.¹¹⁷ John Woods has noted the tremendous elaboration of Uzun Hasan's administrative apparatus through the appointment of representatives of the most prominent local Iranian families – including the Kujuji of Azerbaijan and the Savaji and Daylami of 'Iraq-i 'Ajam – to see to the administrative, fiscal, and religious concerns of the sultanate.¹¹⁸ In many significant instances, Uzun Hasan favored the high-ranking secretaries of his defeated enemies and appointed them to high office within the Aqqyunlu civilian administrative corps. To wit, he appointed Siraj al-Din Qasim Naqshbandi, a twenty-year veteran of the Qarayunlu court, his chief of protocol and chancellor.¹¹⁹ Similarly, after the defeat of Sultan-Abu Sa'id, he installed 'Abd al-Hayy, the Timurid sultan's chancellor (*sahib-i divan-i insha*) in the same office, in which capacity the formerly Timurid chancellor instilled the qualities of calligraphic "firmness, maturity, solidity, and taste" among the secretaries of the Aqqyunlu court, including Bidlisi.¹²⁰ Perhaps most significantly for the future ideological trajectory of the sultanate, he invited Abu Bakr Tihrani to join the Aqqyunlu court. In the years before joining Uzun Hasan in the spring of 1469, Tihrani had worked within the chanceries of Timurid and Qaraqyunlu courts and had begun work on a history upon the request of the Qaraqyunlu ruler Jahanshah.¹²¹ Although it is not clear what came of Tihrani's earlier historical work, he likely incorporated elements of this history into his new work for Uzun Hasan.¹²²

Indeed, there are several indications that the recruitment of Timurid and Qaraqyunlu chancery personnel had an immediate effect on the ideological positions of Uzun Hasan's regime. Within several months of the execution of Sultan-Abu Sa'id in early 1469, the Aqqyunlu chancery

¹¹⁷ For discussions of a similar phenomenon of administrative recruitment under Shah Isma'il, see Jean Aubin, "Études safavides I: Šāh Ismā'īl et les notables de l'Iraq persan," *JESHO* 2 (1959): 37–81; Mitchell, *The Practice of Politics in Safavid Iran*, 48–52.

¹¹⁸ Woods, *The Aqqyunlu*, 108.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 18; Karbalā'ī Tabrizī, *Rawżāt al-jinān va-jannāt al-janān*, 1:89–91.

¹²⁰ Khwāndamīr, *Ḥabīb al-sīyar*, 4:108; on the influence of 'Abd al-Hayy's *ta'liq* style on Bidlisi and the other secretaries of Aqqyunlu lands, see Aḥmad ibn Mīr Munshī al-Ḥusaynī, *Calligraphers and Painters: A Treatise by Qādī Aḥmad, Son of Mīr-Munshī (circa A.H. 1015/A.D. 1606)*, trans. Vladimir Minorsky (Washington, 1959), 84–85.

¹²¹ Tihrani, *Kitab-ı Diyarbakriyya*, 1:vii–xvi; for Tihrani's account of how he joined Uzun Hasan's court, see *ibid.*, 2:514–16.

¹²² Approximately one-fifth of Tihrani's narrative is devoted to political developments of the mid-fifteenth century outside Aqqyunlu domains, especially with respect to the Qaraqyunlu conquests under Jahanshah (Tihrani, *Kitab-ı Diyarbakriyya*, 2:285–375).

was producing assertive diplomatic correspondence that proclaimed Uzun Hasan's successes as a manifestation of God's will. In two letters sent to the Ottoman and Mamluk courts, Uzun Hasan's chancery officials laid out an extensive justification for these claims through an esoteric lettrist exegesis of the first verses of *Surat al-Rum* of the Quran.¹²³ Based upon the numerological value of two words in one of the verses, the composers of these diplomatic letters asserted God's forewarning of Uzun Hasan's ascendancy in 1467. While the verse in question had been associated previously with prognostications of seminal political events, the innovative reading of the verse by the Aqqyunlu chancery functionaries demonstrates the extent to which skilled and learned secretaries sought to undergird the ideological positions of their sovereigns with knowledge and arguments gleaned from esoteric traditions.¹²⁴ Other intellectuals within the Aqqyunlu orbit soon recognized the power of such arguments, for within a few years a number of prominent scholars incorporated them into their panegyrics and historical narratives of Uzun Hasan. For instance, in the dedication to Uzun Hasan in his work on ethics, Jalal al-Din Davani alludes to the numerologically significant words from the Quranic verse as proof of "the firmness of the foundation of [Uzun Hasan's] triumphant fortune."¹²⁵ Chroniclers of the Aqqyunlu dynasty, including Bidlisi's colleague in the chancery, Khunji-Isfahani, also incorporated the prophetic aspects of the Quranic verse into their historical accounts of Uzun Hasan's rise.¹²⁶ The use of potent occult exegeses of the Quran for ideological purposes also spread further afield with Bidlisi's immigration to Ottoman lands. In *The Eight Paradises*, Bidlisi, who was no doubt aware of the ideologically charged exegesis of the Aqqyunlu chancery in the time of Uzun Hasan, redeployed and reinterpreted the

¹²³ Woods, *The Aqqyunlu*, 100–2; on their lettrist intellectual underpinnings, see Melvin Koushki, "The Delicate Art of Aggression," 202–3; for the two letters, see Lajos Fekete, *Einführung in die persische Paläographie: 101 persische Dokumente* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1977), 123–43; 'Abd al-Husayn Navā'i, *Asnād va mukātabāt-i tārikhī-i Irān az Taymūr tā Shāh Ismā'il* (Tihārān: Bungāh-i Tarjumah va Nashr, 1341), 561–70.

¹²⁴ On earlier uses of the verses for prognostication, see Matthew Melvin-Koushki, "The Quest for a Universal Science: The Occult Philosophy of Šā'in al-Dīn Turka Isfahānī (1369–1432)" (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 2012), 290–305.

¹²⁵ Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad As'ad Davānī, *Akhlāq-i Jalālī*, ed. 'Abdallāh Mas'ūdī Ārānī (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Ittilā'āt, 1391), 51.

¹²⁶ Khunji-Isfahānī, *Tārikh-i 'ālam-ārā-yi amīnī*, 165; for another near contemporary interpretation of the verse, see 'Abd Allāh ibn Faṭḥ Allāh al-Baghdādī, *Turkmenische Herrscher des 15. Jahrhunderts in Persien und Mesopotamien nach dem Tārikh al-Giyā'tī*, ed. Marianne Schmidt-Dumont (Freiburg i. Br.: Schwarz, 1970), 29–31.

same verse, as he put it, “in the tradition of lettrist proofs and divinatory testimony”¹²⁷ to substantiate the favor that God had shown Mehmed II in his victory over Uzun Hasan at Otlukbeli in 1473.¹²⁸

While we do not know who composed these letters for Uzun Hasan, it is entirely possible that their authors were recently integrated former Qaraqyunlu and Timurid secretaries. Certainly, such secretaries were quickly incorporated into the Aqqyunlu chancery and assigned to compose the most important missives. For instance, in the spring of 1470, Abu Bakr Tihrani penned the rescript announcing Uzun Hasan’s appointment of Yadigar Muhammad as independent governor of Khurasan. More than a routine writ of investiture, the appointment of the Timurid prince to govern Khurasan signaled the Aqqyulu ruler’s intention to assert his sovereignty across Iranian lands, and as such, Tihrani deployed the hyper-literate imperial chancery style in announcing and explaining Yadigar Muhammad’s appointment.¹²⁹ Perhaps more importantly, these secretaries were also occasionally encouraged to produce historical works. Within two years of his arrival at the Aqqyunlu court, Uzun Hasan appointed Abu Bakr Tihrani in 1470–71 to write a history of the Aqqyunlu confederation. The resulting work, *The Diyarbakrian Tome* (*Kitab-i Diyarbakriya*), was the first major work in the fifteenth century to apply consistently the title of *sahib-qiran* to a non-Timurid ruler.¹³⁰

Ultimately, the movement of chancery officials who were thoroughly conversant with the Timurid vocabulary of sovereignty spread to lands beyond the Persophone political context of Iran. Especially as a consequence of the disorder and chaos of the final decades of Aqqyunlu rule, a

¹²⁷ Bidlīsī, *HB*, 470b.

¹²⁸ Bidlīsī’s exegesis of the Quranic verses includes a traditional interpretation of the verses, the details of which are later used to substantiate his lettrist reading (Bidlīsī, *HB*, 469b–71b).

¹²⁹ Adnan Sadık Erzi, “Akkoyunlu ve Karakoyunlu tarihi hakkında araştırmaları,” *Belleten* 18 (1954): 181; a copy of the rescript is preserved in *Javāmi’ al-inshā*, SK, Nuruosmaniye 4301, 71b–76a; for an edited version, see Navā’ī, *Asnād va mukātibāt-i tārikhī-i Irān az Taymūr tā Shāh Ismā’il*, 320–23; for background on the Yadigar Muhammad affair, see Woods, *The Aqqyunlu*, 112–13.

¹³⁰ Throughout the work, Tihrani refers to Uzun Hasan as *sahib-qiran*, Tihrani, *Kitab-i Diyarbakriyya*; even in the early fifteenth century, the title was occasionally associated with non-Timurid rulers. Ahmed-i Da’i refers to his patron, Süleyman, the Ottoman prince and presumptive heir of Bayezid I, as the *sahib-qiran* of the domain of temporal authority (*Siyāset mülkinün şāhib-kirānı*) (Ahmed Dâi, *Çengnâme*, ed. Gönül Alpay Tekin, vol. 16., *Sources of Oriental Languages and Literatures* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Üniversitesi, 1992), 313); for a reference to its usage during the reign of Murad II, see Yılmaz, *Caliphate Redefined*, 130.

number of secretaries and courtiers made their way further west to the Ottoman and Mamluk courts, where they were employed as secretaries or were commissioned to write encomiastic historical or literary pieces. As discussed in Chapter 3, the Mamluk sultan Qansawh al-Ghawri actively patronized emigres from Aqqyunlu lands during the first two decades of the sixteenth century.¹³¹ Such men produced literary works, such as a Turkish translation of Firdawsi's *Book of Kings*, and memorialized the polite gatherings of the Mamluk sultan through specially produced recordings of Qansawh al-Ghawri's most eloquent and pithy remarks and conversations. In these works, the Timurid vocabulary of sovereignty, including *sahib-qiran* and *mujaddid*, appears among the titles and epithets associated with Qansawh al-Ghawri.¹³²

Perhaps of even greater significance was the impact of Persian state functionaries in Ottoman domains during this period. Although Bidlisi, through his varied political activities and monumental dynastic history, stands as the most prominent and successful of these Persian émigrés to Ottoman lands in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, several other officials and courtiers arrived in Ottoman lands, joined the chancery or court, and left their mark on Ottoman chancery practice and the ideological trajectory of the sultanate. The arrival of these Persian secretaries was also part of a broader movement of scholars, doctors, star-gazers, poets, calligraphers, bookbinders, musicians, and other courtiers from Iranian lands between the latter years of Mehmed II's reign and early years of Süleyman's reign in the 1520s. The movement of these men was often, although not exclusively, precipitated by the general political turmoil that afflicted Iran following the death of Ya'qub in 1490, and made all the more acute with the rise to power of Isma'il in the years following 1501.

Yet if political turmoil in Iran pushed these skilled and learned Persophone classes, the meteoric rise of the Ottoman dynasty, especially in the years and decades following the conquest of Constantinople in 1453, offered a strong pull through the promise of patronage and status at the ascendant court. Beyond the possibility of remuneration and reward, the continuous interaction between the Ottoman learned class, such as it existed, and its counterpart in Iran strengthened the scholarly and cultural ties between Ottoman lands and Iran over the entire course of the fifteenth century. Frequently, budding young scholars from Ottoman lands traveled

¹³¹ For the context of such patronage, see Flemming, "Şerîf, Sultan Ğavrî und die 'Perser.'"

¹³² For a more detailed discussion of this phenomenon, see Chapter 3.

to places such as Tabriz and Shiraz to study under the leading luminaries of their day. In the decades after their return to Ottoman lands, these scholars entered Ottoman religious-administrative service and rose quickly within the ranks of the developing learned hierarchy. They also maintained close ties with their colleagues in Iran through the upkeep of correspondence and the exchange of scholarly works. Significantly, their elevated position in later years and their usually positive disposition towards colleagues in Iran produced ideal conditions for Persian emigres to find a warm welcome in Ottoman lands upon their arrival. The patronage offered by Mü'eyyedzade – and outlined in Chapter 2 – is emblematic of this process. In addition to his early support and encouragement of Bidlisi, Mü'eyyedzade helped settle in Ottoman lands four of his former schoolmates from his early days in Shiraz.¹³³

The relatively successful settlement of emigres in Ottoman lands was also facilitated by the nurturing networks of professional and social affiliation cultivated by Persian émigrés themselves. Those scholars and skilled men who made inroads at the Ottoman court frequently aided later arrivals in various professional and personal capacities. Some of Bidlisi's most vocal and eloquent assessors of his history were Persian poets, such as Basiri, who duly lauded the accomplishment of their compatriot.¹³⁴ Beyond such ephemeral support, émigrés who had successfully integrated into the court could and did help their skilled and worthy friends and colleagues with introductions to leading patrons of the court. Most prominent in this regard during the reign of Selim and the early years of Süleyman was Hakim Shah-Muhammad Qazvini, one of the palace physicians.¹³⁵ Qazvini had himself arrived in Ottoman lands after a period of sojourn and study in Mecca through the recommendation of Mü'eyyedzade, who raved to Bayezid at one learned gathering about the doctor's abilities and fine qualities as a belle-lettrist. Mü'eyyedzade's recommendation secured from the sultan an offer of 120 silver aspers per day as stipend for the Persian doctor. Once at the Ottoman court, Qazvini's reputation as a refined and discerning man of letters continued to spread and strengthen, and, during the reign of Selim, he was frequently present at the most important social and learned gatherings of the court and wider

¹³³ Atçıl, *Scholars and Sultans*, 98.

¹³⁴ *Divân-i Başîrî*, 280a.

¹³⁵ For biographical sketches of Qazvini's life, see Taşköprizade, *al-Shaqa'iq al-nu'maniyya*, 330–31; Nevizade Atayi, *Hadâ'iq al-Haqâ'iq*, ed. Abdülkadir Özcan (Istanbul: Çağrı Yayınları, 1989), 341–42.

society. Although introduced to court through the auspices of Mü'eyyed-zade, his old schoolmate, Qazvini became something of a cultural taste-maker in his own right – in 'Âşık Çelebi's estimation he was not simply the chief physician, but rather he was, at the same time, foremost among the sultan's boon companions.¹³⁶ In this capacity, he was well positioned to introduce other Persian émigré literati to the court, most notably, Ada'i, who, in the preface to his verse history of Selim's reign, acknowledges Qazvini's crucial role – along with the support of another prominent émigré and instructor of the palace pages named Shams al-Din Barda'i – in securing an introduction to the chief military judge of the sultanate. Ada'i contrasts the solitude and isolation of his first days in Istanbul with hope of good fortune offered by the intercession of his two compatriots:

As a foreigner's lonely pain began to take hold of me
The aid of fortune and luck came to me in the end

They showed me the path of one hundred dignities and honors
And sent me to two valued men of learning

One, in medicine, described as a messiah
The other, an ocean of knowledge along the path of gnosis

One raised up the banner from Qazvin
And drew his pen over the verse of the Pleiades

The other raised up his head in Barda'
And spurred the steed of art in the wide world

Through the countenance of those two good-natured ones
The reins of desire came into my hands

They became the founders of my sustenance and joy
And showed the way to the gate of fortune

They became for me guides on the path of beneficence
In my servile homage to the chief judge¹³⁷

More generally, Qazvini worked to augment the reputation of Persian émigrés in Ottoman lands through his translation and continuation of *Majalis-i nafa'is* (*Assemblies of Precious Things*), the biographical

¹³⁶ 'Âşık Çelebi, *Meşâ'irü'l-şu'arâ*, 1419.

¹³⁷ Muhammad Adâ'î Şirâzî, *Adâ'î Şirâzî ve Selâm-nâmesi: inceleme – metin – çeviri*, ed. Abdüsselam Bilgen (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2007), 20 (Persian text).

dictionary of poets by the late Timurid litterateur and statesman 'Ali-Shir Nava'i.¹³⁸ Although Qazvini's additions to the dictionary are ostensibly intended to record the fine poets writing in Persian in Ottoman lands and Iran during the reign of Selim, his work is clearly geared toward an Ottoman audience, since a large number of the entries are of poets who immigrated to or passed through Ottoman lands, many of whom are not remembered elsewhere.

Whether through the advocacy of Qazvini or not, the reign of Selim was remembered as something of a high watermark in the patronage of Persian at the Ottoman court. Bidlisi's initial reception at the court of Selim's father, Bayezid, suggests the perceptible interest in cultivating Ottoman historical works in a hyperliterate Persian style – a point further explored in the following chapter – yet, as we have seen in Chapter 2, the reception of his history was not universally positive in the last decade of Bayezid's reign, in part, because elements within the court seemed to be awakening to the possibility of an equally elevated Turkish prose style. Be that as it may, the trajectory of Turkish or Persian as the preferred language of patronage was not strictly linear in the first decades of sixteenth century. At different times and in different contexts, patrons, including the sultan, could and did leave their mark on the literary and linguistic outlook of Ottoman prose and poetic output. In contrast to the relative ambivalence of the final years of Bayezid's reign, under Selim, Persian appeared ascendant again. According to 'Âşık Çelebi, this development was largely a consequence of Ottoman eastward expansion. Writing in the introduction to his biographical dictionary of *Rumi* poets, 'Âşık Çelebi traces the emergence of Turkish poetry in an Ottoman context across the reigns of the first ten sultans. For Selim, he notes that the Ottoman conquest of western Iran, Syria, and Egypt prompted the literati of Arab and Persian lands to offer odes and prose accounts of his exploits – an observation similarly made by Bidlisi in the introduction to his history of Selim's reign.¹³⁹ The sultan appreciated the fine literary qualities of this work and generously rewarded poets for their efforts. "However, since they were *Rumis*, they pursued Turkish poetry. Yet because that rider of the battle horse of chivalry and intelligence (the sultan) was more inclined to Persian, they also pursued the Persian style. For this reason, Persian poetry was more plentiful and, among the people, more famous than

¹³⁸ Qazvini's continuation is published in 'Ali-shir Nava'i, *Tazkira-i majālis al-nafā'is*, ed. 'Alī Aşghar Hikmat (Tehran: Kitābfurūsh-i Manūchihri, 1368 [1984]).

¹³⁹ 'Âşık Çelebi, *Meşâ'iriüŝ-ŝu'ârâ*, 198; Bidlisi, *Salımshāhnāma*, 19b.

Turkish poetry.”¹⁴⁰ The patronage priorities of Selim’s reign would also appear to substantiate ‘Âşık Çelebi’s assessment in some measure. With the exception of İshak Çelebi’s history of Selim’s reign, the first three histories of the so-called *Selimname* genre were written either in Arabic or Persian by new arrivals to Ottoman lands.¹⁴¹ In the immediate wake of his conquests, ‘Ali ibn Muhammad al-Lakhmi al-Ishbili offered a work of high praise for the new sultan. The Timurid vocabulary of sovereignty was on full display in this work through an apologia of the conquest based on Selim’s status as *mujaddid*.¹⁴² Yet more generally, Selim seemed to prefer reading Persian to Turkish. When faced with the difficulty of reading the Arabic of al-Damiri’s *Hayat al-hayawan* (*The Life of Animals*) and Ibn Khallikan’s *Wafayat al-a‘yan* (*Obituaries of the Eminent*), he asked Bidlisi and another Persian émigré named Qazizada to translate the work, not into Turkish, but Persian.¹⁴³

It would appear then that Persian émigrés with literary pretensions and secretarial skill were in high demand and well positioned to make an impact on the chancery practice and literary scene at the Ottoman court. Indeed, between 1473 and 1520, a number of Persian emigres arrived in Ottoman lands and took up posts as secretaries. Such men arrived in Ottoman lands of their own free will – as in the case of Bidlisi and Qazvini – but on occasion the incorporation of Persian chancery officials into Ottoman ranks occurred under coercive circumstances. In fact, at least two Persian functionaries in the Ottoman chancery obtained the patronage of the court after having been captured in battle.

Mawlana Munshi was one. After his capture by the Ottomans in the aftermath of the Battle of Otlukbeli in 1473, he served two Ottoman sultans as a composer of royal diplomatic correspondence in Persian.¹⁴⁴ Although Mawlana Munshi never rose to a position of prominence within the Ottoman chancery, his twenty years of activity within Ottoman secretarial circles had an impact on several generations of Ottoman chancery officials. His collection of prose writing circulated in his own day and was held in high regard by some of the most prominent Ottoman litterateurs of

¹⁴⁰ ‘Âşık Çelebi, *Meşâ’iriü’-şu‘ârâ*, 198.

¹⁴¹ These early works are: a lost work likely in Arabic of ‘Abd al-Rahim al-‘Abbasi and the works on Selim’s reign of Qazizada, and Ada’i; for a discussion of the *Selimname* genre, see Çıpa, *The Making of Selim*, 140–45.

¹⁴² al-Ishbili, *Durr al-muşân fî sirat al-Muza‘ffar Salīm Khān*, 1–2.

¹⁴³ Bidlīsī, *Hayāt al-hayawān*, TSMK Ms. Hazine 1665; Qāzizāda, *Wafayāt al-a‘yān*, Bodleian Library Ms. Ouseley 176 a+b.

¹⁴⁴ On Mawlana Munshi’s capture, see Bidlīsī, *HB*, 468a.

the sixteenth century, including Mü'eyyedzade, who had a copy of Mawlana Munshi's collection in his personal library.¹⁴⁵ Clearly, Mawlana Munshi's prose work remained in high esteem well into the reign of Süleyman, as 'Âşık Çelebi used the great writer's work as a benchmark by which he judged the prose compositional accomplishments of three poets and secretaries from the reign of Süleyman.¹⁴⁶ The comparison between the Persian stylist and the Ottoman secretaries demonstrates the extent to which Persian prose collections served as models for Ottoman prose writers of Turkish. Even in the seventeenth century, by which point Ottoman secretaries wrote almost exclusively in Turkish in their professional capacities, the prestige of Mawlana Munshi's prose persisted through its collection and presentation by the Ottoman chief secretary of the imperial council, Sarı 'Abdullah Efendi.¹⁴⁷

The second prisoner-cum-secretary was Kabir Latifi Qazizada, who fell captive to Sultan Selim after the defeat of Shah Isma'il at Chaldiran in 1514.¹⁴⁸ After a short spell as a prisoner, Qazizada was freed and permitted to join the secretaries of the Royal Council.¹⁴⁹ In this capacity, he accompanied Selim on his conquests of Syria and Egypt in 1516–17. During these campaigns, Qazizada contributed to the composition of victory proclamations in Persian destined for foreign courts, and, while in Syria, helped conduct the first Ottoman surveys of the financial resources of the newly conquered territory. He recorded these activities in one of the earliest historical accounts of Selim's conquests. This work, known as *Ghazavat-i Sultan Salim* (*The Campaigns of Sultan Selim*), deployed the florid and ornate chancery style favored by Persian secretaries and served as a source of inspiration for Bidlisi when he sat down to compose his own account of Selim's reign.¹⁵⁰

Despite the important roles these men played in their own day, Bidlisi largely eclipsed them as an effective conveyor of the Timurid vocabulary of sovereignty. Through his composition of two large and well-received histories and prominent assignments to compose sultanic correspondence, Bidlisi had myriad opportunities to leave his mark on Ottoman ideological

¹⁴⁵ TSMA D. 9291/2, p. 2.

¹⁴⁶ See entries for the poets Bahri, Sun'î, and Şeyda, 'Âşık Çelebi, *Meşâ'irü'ş-Şu'arâ*, 416, 1298, 1460.

¹⁴⁷ Sarı 'Abdullâh Efendi, *Munsha'ât-i fârsî*.

¹⁴⁸ Hâkîm Shâh-Muḥammad Qazvînî, *Tazkirah-i majâlis al-nafâ'is*, ed. 'Alî Aşghar Hikmat (Tehran: Kitâbfurûshî-i Manûchihrî, 1363), 396.

¹⁴⁹ Qāzizāda, *Ghazavāt-i Sulṭān Salīm*, 146a.

¹⁵⁰ Bidlīsī, *Salīmshāhnāma*, 21b.

discourses during the reigns of Bayezid II and Selim I. Certain aspects of his thinking on Ottoman kingship were fully accepted and internalized by subsequent Ottoman writers of the sixteenth century. Most significantly, Bidlisi was the first major writer to associate the Ottoman sultans with the concept of religious renewal and to substantiate such association with historically minded arguments in *The Eight Paradises*.¹⁵¹ Later generations of Ottoman historians accepted Bidlisi's reasoning. For instance, Lütü Pasha, the vizier and historian of Süleyman's reign, followed Bidlisi's suggestion that 'Osman, the founder of the dynasty, was the renewer in the seventh Hijri century for his efforts to restore order in the wake of the Chinggisid disturbances.¹⁵² In the third quarter of the fifteenth century, as a consequence of Uzun Hasan's sweeping conquests and his incorporation of Timurid and Qaraqyunlu chancery officials into his administration, claims of the Aqquyunlu sultan's status as *mujaddid* circulated regularly within western Iran and places farther afield. No doubt, Bidlisi mastered the ideological potential of the concept while working as a young secretary in the chancery of Ya'qub. Mention has already been made of his deployment of the title in a letter he composed on behalf of Ya'qub for Bayezid II in 1485.¹⁵³ Yet, Bidlisi's adaptation of centennial renewal to the Ottoman context of the early sixteenth century is significant for it signals the wider spread of the Timurid vocabulary of sovereignty to Ottoman lands in prominently pronounced and sophisticatedly argued terms.

The Ottoman acceptance in some measure of the vocabulary of sovereignty belies, however, the professional and personal challenges faced by these emigres in Ottoman lands. The record of their successful impact on the stylistic and ideological dimensions of the chancery and Ottoman literary production must be set not only against their wider obscurity within modern scholarship, but even within the contours of sixteenth-century Ottoman cultural memory. It is clear that their work mattered in their own times, but the imprint of their output – with the possible exception of Bidlisi – was fleeting. Why this should have been the case is a question to which we will turn in the following two chapters.

¹⁵¹ Bidlīsī, *HB*, 38a.

¹⁵² Luṭfī Paşa, *Tevārīḫ-i Âl-i 'Osmân* (Istanbul: Matba'-'i 'Âmire, 1922), 6c11.

¹⁵³ For discussion of this letter, see Chapter 2; Bidlīsī, *HB*, 536b–38a.

The Canons of Conventional Histories

Despite the impact of his secretarial work and historical writings on the ideological dimensions of the Ottoman Sultanate in the early sixteenth century, Bidlisi's legacy sits uncomfortably within the larger frameworks by which modern historians generally assess the development of a distinctly Ottoman tradition of historical writing. To be sure, Bidlisi's status as a major voice of the dynasty in the reign of Bayezid II is universally affirmed by modern historians, yet his work as historian is all too often mentioned only in passing and with little consideration of precisely what he offered his contemporary readers and subsequent generations of Ottoman historians and litterateurs.

In some measure, the superficial treatment of Bidlisi and his legacy is a consequence of the principal concerns and resources readily available to modern scholarship since the first half of the twentieth century. Such resources – namely, the histories and other narrative material that exist in modern editions – represent only a small proportion of the entire extant corpus of Ottoman historical production, and not necessarily the most widely read or well-known works of their own day or the following decades and centuries. In this sense, the editorial choices of past generations can have a distorting effect on the attention of modern scholars working on Ottoman historiography. In many instances, these editorial decisions have made available to modern audiences works that were frequently copied and cited in earlier centuries – and in this regard, the attention of modern scholarship on historians, such as Neşri from the late fifteenth century and Hoca Sa'deddin or Mustafa 'Âli from the late sixteenth, may be warranted. Yet, on occasion, modern editors have

focused their efforts on exceptional works that offer a unique perspective, but were rarely copied in their own day and likely remained unread until dusted off by Orientalist and Turkish scholars. In this regard, modern scholarly engagement with the history of Mehmed II's reign by Tursun Beğ is a useful case in point. Despite the erudition and historical detail of his account, the work largely languished in the royal library. Only four copies are extant from before the nineteenth century and it seems that only Bidlisi and Kemalpaşazade made direct use of this source in their histories.¹ While in many instances study of these works offers valuable insights, overreliance upon them in examination of the formation and development of the main lines of Ottoman historical writing may be misplaced. Certainly, such rare and unique works may have had an impact on the historiographical contours of their contemporary scene, yet such an impact must be demonstrated through clear references in other historical works or a clear understanding of their authors' relationship with other more widely read historians. Conversely, a work such as Bidlisi's *The Eight Paradises* – extant in more than ninety manuscript recensions, copied in the author's lifetime at least a half dozen times, and used extensively in the historical work of several major Ottoman historians of the sixteenth century – remains at the margins of modern scholarly attention, in part, because it has not been properly edited.²

Beyond the relative inaccessibility of his work, modern historians have tended to neglect Bidlisi's historical writing because it appears to sit outside the main lines of historiographical inquiry that have animated scholarship over the last century. For much of this period, historians examined Ottoman chronicles produced from the mid-fifteenth century onwards to establish the basic political chronology and institutional structures of the Ottoman polity from its inception in the early fourteenth century. Not surprisingly given its rich narrative detail, *The Eight Paradises* was an occasionally referenced, yet indispensable, source for a number of historians working along these lines from Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall in the first half of the nineteenth century to Halil İnalcık in the latter half of

¹ Tursun Bey, *Târîh-i Ebü'l-Feth*, xxviii–xxix; on Kemalpaşazade's use of Tursun Beğ, see Halil İnalcık, "Tursun Beg, Historian of Mehmed the Conqueror's Time," *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 69 (1977): 69; Bidlisi includes a Persian translation of Tursun Beğ's letter of Mehmed II to Isma'il Beğ İsfendiyaroğlu (Bidlisi, *HB*, 428a).

² For details on the manuscript recensions of *The Eight Paradises*, see Markiewicz, "The Crisis of Rule," 399–415.

the twentieth.³ Significantly, in parallel with this positivist use of Ottoman chronicles, modern scholars, especially since the pioneering work of Victor Ménége, began to take up consideration of Ottoman historical writing – its form, function, style – as a subject worthy of study in its own right.⁴ Early work in this mode sought to identify the development of an Ottoman tradition of historical writing by establishing the intertextual relationships between early chronicles, in part to clarify on what basis historians could form a reliable picture of the origins of the Ottoman Sultanate in the fourteenth century.⁵ Since the work of Cornell Fleischer and Cemal Kafadar, historians have studied carefully the contexts of historical production and the literary, stylistic, and ideological facets of narratives as key aspects in the formation and articulation of individual and collective identities and political and social discourses between the mid-fifteenth and late sixteenth centuries.⁶ The approach has opened up new vistas for modern historians and, in the last generation, scholars have pointed to the great variety of motivations and aspects of agency exhibited by Ottoman historians as they narrated the dynasty's past.⁷ Because such historical works – whether regnal, dynastic, or universal histories; biographical dictionaries; or collections of official correspondence – largely

³ Hammer-Purgstall used the work as an important source for the reign of Bayezid II (Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall, *Geschichte der Osmanischen Reiches*, vol. I, xxxiv–xxxvi, vol. 2, 630); in 1960, Halil İnalçık criticized Franz Babinger's failure to consult a number of important sources for the reign of Mehmed II, including Bidlisi's *magnum opus* (Halil İnalçık, "Mehmed the Conqueror (1432–1481) and His Time," *Speculum* 35, 3 (1960): 408–27).

⁴ Victor Ménége, "A Survey of the Early Ottoman Histories, with Studies on Their Textual Problems and Sources" (Ph.D., University of London (SOAS), 1961); Victor Ménége, *Neshri's History of the Ottomans: The Sources and Development of the Text* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964); Victor Ménége, "The Beginnings of Ottoman Historiography," in *Historians of the Middle East*, eds. P. M. Holt and Bernard Lewis (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), 168–79.

⁵ Ménége, "The Beginnings of Ottoman Historiography," 168–79; Halil İnalçık, "The Rise of Ottoman Historiography," in *Historians of the Middle East*, eds. P. M. Holt and Bernard Lewis (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), 152–67.

⁶ Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual*; Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*.

⁷ For assessments of these developments, see Gabriel Piterberg, *An Ottoman Tragedy: History and Historiography at Play* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 30–45; Baki Tezcan, "The Politics of Early Modern Ottoman Historiography," in *The Early Modern Ottomans: Remapping the Empire*, eds. Virginia Aksan and Daniel Goffman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 167–99; H. Erdem Cıpa and Emine Fetvacı (eds.), *Writing History at the Ottoman Court: Editing the Past, Fashioning the Future* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), vii–xii.

focus on the triumphs and trials of the ruling family and the military, administrative, and religious elite who were most closely affiliated with it, questions of political legitimacy and dynastic or state ideology have dominated modern scholarly interests. These questions have sharpened scholarly focus on two separate, but interrelated issues that inform the development of Ottoman historical writing in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

In the latter half of the fifteenth century, Ottoman histories frequently reflected a more basic political and social tension between the standard bearers of an earlier fourteenth-century Ottoman frontier society and the courtly proponents of a centralizing Ottoman state. In this context, historical writing became a powerful genre for the subtle criticism or ardent apologia of the dynasty. Cemal Kafadar, and more recently Murat Cem Mengüç, have examined these works to shed light on this major conflictual aspect of the latter half of the fifteenth century.⁸ Their work has largely cast doubt on the notion of a monolithic, court-oriented historiography, the purported purpose of which was the advancement of a state ideology that necessarily whitewashed earlier traditions emblematic of the decentralized political environment and syncretic landscape out of which the Ottoman dynasty emerged in the fourteenth century. Instead, they have pointed to the rich range of historiographical attitudes exhibited by historians during this period and, in the case of Mengüç, suggest that historians until late in the fifteenth century constructed powerful narratives of the dynasty's past independently of the principal concerns of the court.⁹

The conflicting concerns of historical writing of the late fifteenth century contrasts markedly with the sixteenth century. This later period is dominated by historians with substantial ties to the emerging Ottoman imperial social system. As Kaya Şahin has observed, such a system consists of a carefully articulated set of relationships between the sultan; the military, administrative, and religious ruling elite (*'askeri*); and a vast tax-paying population (*re'aya*). The system is defined and legitimized through a harmonious synthesis of sacred tradition (*shari'a*) and dynastic precedent (*kanun*) that emphasizes the justice of the sultan and his agents,

⁸ Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*, 90–117; Murat Mengüç points to the varied positions of historians during the reign of Bayezid II to suggest that there was no coherent dynastic ideology; on different strands of historical writing among Ottoman scholars in the fifteenth century, see Murat Cem Mengüç, "A Study of 15th-Century Ottoman Historiography" (D.Phil., University of Cambridge, 2008, 230–31).

⁹ Murat Cem Mengüç, "Histories of Bayezid I, Historians of Bayezid II: Rethinking Late Fifteenth-Century Ottoman Historiography," *BSOAS* 76, 3 (2013): 389.

supported through the extraction of resources, and defended against internal and external threats to the empire.¹⁰ Historians in this period, almost all of whom were closely attached to this order as members of the ruling elite – whether as bureaucrats, religious scholar-administrators, or court functionaries – buttressed and elaborated the ideals and mechanics of the system through their histories of the Ottoman distant and recent past.

To be sure, as in the fifteenth century, the views and approaches of these historians were never completely uniform. And, indeed, in the latter half of the sixteenth century the experimentation of the Ottoman court with an officially backed historiography – often in Persian – through verse epics produced by the office of court historian (*şehnameci*) was met with considerable skepticism and criticism by the learned and bureaucratic classes, who were themselves active proponents of an alternative historiographical vision.¹¹ Even among the officially produced histories, various patrons and factions around the sultan produced a competitive climate for historical production in which the content and style of the works were negotiated and mediated.¹² Significantly, language of composition – Persian or Turkish – was one of the major differences between the official historiographers, who in most cases were émigrés from Iran, and their scholarly and secretarial counterparts, who generally had been raised and educated within the central lands of the empire. In this sense, historiography in the sixteenth century also strove to define and articulate the ideals, sensibilities, and limits of a distinctly Ottoman cultural mode. Insofar as modern historians judge the approach of the scholar-bureaucrats as dominant, such a cultural mode was decidedly Sunni, and, while deeply indebted to learned and literary traditions in Arabic

¹⁰ Şahin, *Empire and Power*, 160.

¹¹ On the office of court historian, see Christine Woodhead, “An Experiment in Official Historiography: The Post of Şehnameci in the Ottoman Empire, ca. 1555–1605,” *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 75 (1983): 157–82; Christine Woodhead, *Ta'likizāde's Şehnâme-i hümayūn: A History of the Ottoman Campaign into Hungary, 1593–94* (Berlin: K. Schwartz, 1982); Tezcan, “The Politics of Early Modern Ottoman Historiography.”

¹² Emine Fetvacı, *Picturing History at the Ottoman Court* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013); on the reception of official histories, see Christine Woodhead, “Reading Ottoman Şehnames: Official Historiography in the Late Sixteenth Century,” *Studia Islamica* 104–5 (2007): 70–76; Christine Woodhead, “Murad III and the Historians: Representations of Ottoman Imperial Authority in Late 16th Century Historiography,” in *Authority and Legitimacy in the Ottoman Empire*, eds. Hakan Karateke and Maurus Reinkowski (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 85–98.

and Persian, proudly asserted the suitability of a high-register Turkish language for the expression of erudite learning and belles lettres. Yet even if their histories explicitly and implicitly served to support the sultan, his court, and the broader order, they frequently undertook such work in nonofficial capacities, and, indeed, appeared to reject on some level the overt official attempts to define the scope, aesthetic sensibilities, and linguistic preferences of an Ottoman historiographical tradition.

Bidlisi's work in important ways seems to stand apart from the central concerns of both fifteenth-century Ottoman historians – whether independent *gazi-dervishes* or the Ottoman court functionaries – and the later sixteenth-century historians, most of whom exhibited in their histories the self-conscious traits of their scholarly bureaucratic class. In both cases, modern historians emphasize Turkish as the primary medium of these historiographical projects. In its earlier expression, many of the most well-studied Ottoman historical works were composed in a simple and straightforward Turkish prose that in some measure seemed to accord well with the nostalgic remembrance of a frontier society quickly giving way to more centralizing tendencies. In contrast, modern historians have noted the near universal embrace of a hyper-literate Ottoman Turkish language as one of the key aspects of Ottoman historical writing in the sixteenth century and productively posited that the development of this language was a major feature of a much larger project to define the tastes of a confident imperial culture.¹³ Because Bidlisi wrote his historical works in Persian, his contribution to either of these tendencies is not immediately apparent. Moreover, his writings seem neither to emerge from the earlier tradition with its palpable sense of nostalgia for a freewheeling *gazi* past, nor do they appear to herald the emergence of the confident sixteenth-century Ottoman cultural ethos.

Yet, in some measure, this picture of the main lines of the Ottoman historiographical tradition in these centuries neglects the very broad scope within which historians in Ottoman lands worked. For, even as Ottomans affirm the multiethnic and cosmopolitan aspects of the empire, the study of intellectual and cultural phenomena generally unfolds within relatively narrowly construed linguistic parameters that assume Turkish sources produced within a Balkan-Anatolian context as the most representative and salient cultural products of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. In this sense, Bidlisi and his work simply do not fit. However, as Bidlisi's

¹³ Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual*, 241; Şahin, *Empire and Power*, 197–98, 227–28.

histories demonstrate, the Ottoman court and Ottoman historians were not isolated from the wider currents of historiographical thought and the broader narrative and stylistic approaches of historical writing in Arabic, and especially Persian. Indeed, throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the Ottoman court was keenly aware of near contemporary developments in other parts of the Islamicate ecumene and frequently encouraged Ottoman historical production along these ecumenical lines. Moreover, Ottoman historians in both the fifteenth and sixteenth century were receptive to these developments and regularly consulted histories produced outside the Balkans and Anatolia and sought to adapt their aesthetic sensibilities to writing Ottoman history. In this manner, we should perhaps approach the development of an Ottoman tradition of historical writing as a product of a much broader conversation across Islamic lands about how to study and narrate the human past.

Two cases from the beginning and end of the sixteenth century highlight these points. In 1502, the same year that Bidlisi arrived in Ottoman lands, Hızır ibn 'Ömer 'Atufi, a scholar and palace servant, completed a catalog of the entire contents of the Ottoman royal library.¹⁴ The list includes more than 5,000 volumes and 7,000 titles and, in its wide-ranging content, demonstrates the eclectic interests of the court at the turn of the sixteenth century. Not surprisingly, the majority of these holdings are in Arabic and relate to the religious sciences – study of the Quran, exegesis, law, theology, Sufism, among many others. Even so, history is also a prominent subject within the collection and in a section that included biographies of the prophet Muhammad, chronicles, literary prose narrative stories, political advice literature, and treatises on horsemanship and the instruments of war, 'Atufi identified more than 300 historical works.¹⁵ The most striking feature of these historical works is a pronounced interest in Persian historiography, especially since the advent of the Mongols in Iran in the thirteenth century. The collection includes not only the major histories produced in Iran of Juvayni, Vassaf, and Rashid al-Din, but also important chronicles of more distant lands, including several of the Delhi Sultanate.¹⁶ In contrast, the holdings pertaining to Ottoman history number only twenty-two titles, most of which consist of histories of the reigns of Mehmed II and Bayezid II or short treatises pertaining to single campaigns. Many of these Ottoman histories are in

¹⁴ Török F 59.

¹⁵ On the historical section of the library, see Maroth, "The Library of Sultan Bayazit II".

¹⁶ See, for example, the discussion of *Crown of Deeds* in Chapter 4.

Persian and the titles offer little evidence that the vernacular Turkish dynastic histories of the late fifteenth century held any significant place in the historical canon, such as it existed, at the turn of the sixteenth century. Indeed, while the few references to works described as treatises on the history of the Ottoman sultans may be one or another of these vernacular Turkish histories, it is possible that the royal library did not receive the histories of 'Âşikpaşazade or Neşri – two of the most well-studied late fifteenth-century historians among Ottomanists – until after 'Atufi's catalog was completed.¹⁷ More important to the Ottoman historiographical holdings of the library was *Bahjat al-tavarikh* (*The Splendor of History*), the Persian universal history of Şükrullah, of which the library had five copies.¹⁸ On the one hand, insofar as the collection contains few historical works on the Ottoman dynasty, it underscores the tentative nature of Ottoman historical writing at the turn of the sixteenth century. On the other hand, the collection suggests the eclectic and varied historical interests of Ottoman readers at the turn of the sixteenth century.

This varied reading of Ottoman historians is also apparent nearly one hundred years after 'Atufi compiled his catalog. Few Ottoman historians of the sixteenth century offer in any explicit detail the sources they used in the elaboration of their own historical narratives. In this regard, Mustafa 'Âli's introduction to his universal history, *Künhü'l-aḥbār* (*The Essence of History*), stands out as a rare exception for the useful view that it provides of the reading habits of an Ottoman historian. In the introduction, the author lists the 130 works in Arabic and Persian that he used in writing his history.¹⁹ While the list reflects 'Âli's interest in writing a universal history and therefore mostly includes other universal histories – whether in Arabic or Persian – it offers few references to the works of Ottoman scholars.²⁰ As in the case of the royal library, Mustafa 'Âli's reading was decidedly informed by a much broader canon of letters – in Arabic, the histories of al-Tabari, Ibn al-Athir, and Ibn al-Kathir are afforded prominent mention,

¹⁷ The oldest copies of these histories preserved in the Topkapı Palace Museum Library date from the latter decades of the sixteenth century (Karatay, *Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Kütüphanesi Türkçe Yazmalar Kataloğu* (Istanbul: Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi, 1961), vol. 1, 203).

¹⁸ For a discussion of this work, see Sara Nur Yıldız, "Ottoman Historical Writing in Persian, 1400–1600," in *Persian Historiography*, ed. C. P. Melville (London: I. B. Tauris, 2012), 443–450.

¹⁹ Jan Schmidt, *Pure Water for Thirsty Muslims: A Study of Muṣṭafā 'Ālī of Gallipoli's Künhü'l-aḥbār* (Leiden: Het Oosters Instituut, 1991), 22; Muṣṭafā bin Ahmed 'Āli, *Künhü'l-aḥbār*. 5 vols. (Istanbul: Takvimhane-yi Amire, 1277 [1870–71]), 1:17–19.

²⁰ The two exceptions are Taşköprizade's *Shaqa'iq al-nu'maniyya* and an unspecified work of Ebü's-su'ud Efendi.

while in Persian, he cites a long list of universal histories from Firdawsī's verse *Book of Kings* and Bayhaqī's prose history both completed in the eleventh century to Mir Khwand's *Rawzat al-safa'* (*The Garden of Purity*) produced at the end of the fifteenth.²¹ Significantly, Mustafa 'Āli's tastes demonstrate a deep commitment to Persian historiography of the recent past, as his list includes a number of prominent works of the Timurid period – Sharaf al-Din Yazdi, Hafiz-i Abru, Dawlatshah Samarqandi, Mir Khwand, Jami, and Kashifi are all mentioned – as well as works, such as Sam Mirza's *Tuhfa-yi Sami* (*Gift of Sam Mirza*) and Khwandamir's *Habib al-siyar* (*The Beloved of History*), produced in his own century under the authorship or patronage of the rival Safavid dynasty in Iran.²² In its totality, the list outlines the shared historiographical heritage of the Islamicate ecumene produced by the wide-ranging interaction between Arabic and Persian historical thought since the tenth century – and, in the example of *The Essence of History*, by Turkish historiography, as well, in the sixteenth century. Such a shared heritage is further illustrated by comparison of Mustafa 'Āli's reading habits with a book list produced by Muslih al-Din Lari at the beginning of his mid-sixteenth-century universal history in Persian dedicated to the Ottoman sultan Selim II. As a Persian émigré to Ottoman lands with an itinerant career that took him to the court of the Mughal ruler Humayun and centers of learning in Mecca and Aleppo, Lari's background, education, and scholarly disposition differed noticeably from the Ottoman institutions and traditions to which Mustafa 'Āli was so passionately committed throughout his life. Even so, more than half of the fifty or so works listed by Lari in his introduction were also mentioned by 'Āli a generation later and underscore the extent to which Ottoman historians sought to situate their work within the main lines of an Islamic historiographical tradition. Even in the sixteenth century, an age of considerable imperial rivalry among Muslim polities, Mustafa 'Āli's interest in works produced in Safavid Iran affirms the existence of a shared cultural complex stretching from the Balkans to Bengal, and facilitated by a learned and literary canon in Arabic and Persian.²³ While there is little doubt that self-consciously Ottoman gentlemen, such as Mustafa 'Āli, were duly proud of the emergence of an Ottoman cultural ethos in the sixteenth century, they nonetheless

²¹ 'Āli, *Künhü'l-ahbār*, 1:17–19.

²² *Ibid.*, 1:19.

²³ Muşlih al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Şalāh Lārī, *Mir'āt al-adwār wa mirqāt al-akhbār*, ed. Sayyid Jalīl Saghravāniyān (Tehran: Markaz-i Nashr-i Mīrās-i Maktūb, 2014), 1:9–10.

routinely affirmed participation in this much broader cultural landscape grounded in an Islamicate ecumene.

It is in his capacity as advocate and exemplar of these ecumenical ideals that Bidlisi's historical work had the greatest impact on the contours of Ottoman culture at the beginning of the sixteenth century. Indeed, Bidlisi expressed explicitly this understanding of his role towards the end of his life. In the introduction to his history of Selim's reign, he reflected upon the impact of his first history, *The Eight Paradises*. In his estimation, it was not until the completion of this dynastic history that the Ottoman house had been appropriately memorialized. The reason for the shortcoming was that before *The Eight Paradises*, "there had been absolutely no deserving and worthy work in the canon of conventional historical writing (*ba-qanun-i ta'rikh-i mu'tad*) that had informed its reader of their innumerable exploits and commendable acts."²⁴ This canon of conventional histories necessarily reflected an approach to writing the past that was congruent with the learned and hyper-literate frame by which he viewed and assessed his own activity and work. Yet, more importantly, the contours of such a canon may also be observed clearly not only in the content and style of Bidlisi's historical writing, but, indeed, in the approach adopted by most subsequent Ottoman secretaries, litterateurs, and scholars when they themselves took up the task of narrating the dynasty's past.

DEFINING HISTORY IN THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY

Bidlisi's historical work developed against the backdrop of a century-long debate about the nature of historical inquiry and its place within the larger pantheon of the sciences as conceived by Islamic learning. The debate unfolded across a vast geographic space – between Cairo and Herat – and consumed the energies of a number of scholars writing in Arabic and Persian. While the motivations and perspectives of the various scholars differed, the terms and parameters of the debate remained remarkably fixed and focused: What is history? How should it be defined linguistically and practically? Is history a science? If so, what kind of a science is it? How should its aims, problems, and proper spheres of inquiry be defined? Although the scholars who considered these questions frequently arrived at different conclusions, they all firmly agreed, in contrast with the doubt

²⁴ Bidlīsī, *Salimshahnama*, 19b.

of previous generations on the status of history, that historical inquiry did indeed constitute a distinct science requiring its own particular method. More broadly, the debate unfolded in parallel with a general restructuring of knowledge among Muslim encyclopedists, who ultimately came to accept the arguments for the place of history within the classification of the sciences.

Bidlisi participated in this debate by engaging these questions in the introduction to his dynastic history of the Ottoman house, *The Eight Paradises*, and in this manner brought the central concerns of Muslim historians from across the Islamicate ecumene to Ottoman lands. In contrast to the other participants in the debate, he argued for history's status as the preeminent literary science. Yet more fundamentally, Bidlisi's theoretical consideration of history's place among the sciences deeply affected his own outlook as he took up the task of presenting his history to his patrons and defending his work in the light of criticism. More than an abstraction, Bidlisi's consideration of the meaning and proper expression of history had a discernible impact on his life and works that highlights the personal stakes involved in intellectual engagement.

Beginning in the late fourteenth century, historians writing in Arabic, Persian, and occasionally Turkish regularly included commentaries on the purpose and benefits of history among the prefatory remarks of their chronicles.²⁵ While inclusion of such reflections was by no means a new development, the frequency and widespread nature of the phenomenon, in the very least, suggests a resurgence during this period. For the most part, such remarks remained disparate, wide-ranging, and disconnected from any unified discourse. In this regard, Ibn Khaldun's monumental work on the underlying forces that drive historical events, although not completely ignored in the fifteenth century,²⁶ failed to elicit prolonged

²⁵ Historians and scholars in earlier periods occasionally included discussions of history in their introductions, which enumerated the benefits of history or discussed its etymological origins. See, for example, in Arabic, 'Izz al-Dīn ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī al-tārīkh*, 1st edition (Beirut, 1997), 1:9–11; Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Khalīl al-Ṣafadī, *Kitāb al-wāfī bi'l-wafayāt* (Leipzig, 1931), 1:1–46; and in Persian, Ibn Funduq, *Tārīkh-i Bayhaq* (Tehran, 1317 [1938]), 7–17; with respect to Persian historiography in the Timurid and post-Timurid periods, see Sholeh Quinn, "The Timurid Historiographical Legacy: A Comparative Study of Persianate Historical Writing," in *Society and Culture in the Early Modern Middle East: Studies on Iran in the Safavid Period*, ed. Andrew J. Newman (Boston: Leiden, 2003), 23–25.

²⁶ For instance, al-Maqrizi held Ibn Khaldun's *Muqaddima* in high regard (Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sakhāwī, *al-Daw' al-lāmi' li-ahl al-qarn al-tāsi'* (Beirut: Dār Maktabat al-Ḥayāh, 1966), 4:147); on the reception of Ibn Khaldun in the fifteenth century, see

and careful consideration by his contemporaries in Mamluk Egypt or further afield, and is perhaps therefore indicative of the disconnected nature of these sorts of historical reflections.²⁷ Similar circumstances prevailed in Persophone lands. In the middle of the fourteenth century, Ziya' al-Din Barani (fl. 1357/758), historian of the Delhi Sultanate, prefaced his didactic chronicle, *Tarikh-i Firuzshahi* (*History of Firuz Shah*), with a lengthy commentary on the good qualities (*nafasat*) of history.²⁸ In the introduction to his history of Timur, Sharaf al-Din Yazdi postulated the etymological origins of history (*ta'rikh*) in Syriac, defended its study as an honorable branch of knowledge as substantiated by Quranic revelation, pointed to some of its worldly and otherworldly benefits, and compared various dating systems.²⁹ A generation later, Mir Khwand, a historian working in the Herat of Sultan-Husayn Bayqara, offered a lengthy section in the introduction to his world history on the benefits of history.³⁰ Around the same time, the Aqqyunlu historian and colleague of Bidlisi, Fazlullah Khunji-Isfahani, inspired perhaps by Yazdi, offered an apologia for history in his introduction to the history of Sultan Ya'qub, detailed its benefits and aims, and specified his own contribution to the tradition.³¹ At the turn of the sixteenth century, the Egyptian polymath Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti likewise contributed to the burgeoning discourse through his own

Stephen Frederic Dale, *The Orange Trees of Marrakesh: Ibn Khaldun and the Science of Man* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 2015), 255–57.

²⁷ In a later Ottoman context of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Ibn Khaldun's ideas enjoyed a renaissance through the engagement of historians such as Katib Çelebi and Na'ima (Cornell Fleischer, "Royal Authority, Dynastic Cyclism, and 'Ibn Khaldûnism' in Sixteenth-Century Ottoman Letters," in *Ibn Khaldun and Islamic Ideology*, ed. Bruce Lawrence (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1984), 46–68); Gottfried Hagen and Ethan L. Menchinger, "Ottoman Historical Thought," in *A Companion to Global Historical Thought*, eds. Prasenjit Duara, Viren Murthy, and Andrew Sartori (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014), 99–100; Menchinger, *The First of the Ottomans*, 51.

²⁸ Ziya' al-Din Barani, *Tārīkh-i Firūzshāhī*, ed. Sayyid Ahmad Khān (Calcutta, 1862), 9–22; see also Blain Auer, "Pre-Modern Intellectual Debates on the Knowledge of History and Ziya' al-Din Barani's *Tārīkh-i Firūzshāhī*," *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* 52 (2015): 207–23.

²⁹ Sharaf al-Din 'Alī Yazdī, *Zafarnāma*, 1:23–24; see also Binbaş, *Intellectual Networks in Timurid Iran*, 212–16.

³⁰ Muḥammad ibn Khāwandshāh Mīr Khwānd, *Tārīkh-i rawzat al-ṣafā* (Tehran: Chāpkhāna-yi Pirūz, 1338), 1:9–13.

³¹ Faḏl Allāh ibn Rūzbihān Khunji-Isfahānī, *Tārīkh-i 'ālam-āwā-yi amīnī*, 80–96; Charles Melville, "The Historian at Work," in *Persian Historiography*, ed. Charles Melville, *A History of Persian Literature*, vol. X (London: I. B. Tauris, 2012), 64–67.

treatise on the subject.³² Even in the nascent Ottoman historiographical context, historians occasionally sought to elaborate the benefits of history in limited ways. For instance, during the reign of Bayezid II, the Ottoman historian Neşri suggests the fundamental importance of knowledge of history for kings.³³

Concurrent with these disparate reflections, a more limited and focused discourse about the meaning and purpose of history unfolded in the work of five Arabophone and Persophone scholars. These historians, most of whom had indirect scholarly connections to one another, developed a formal approach to locating and defining history within the traditional classification of the sciences (*taqsim al-'ulum*). Even as their particular audiences varied, their analogous formal approaches to discussing history addressed a similar concern for examining the epistemological underpinnings of their subject. Muhammad ibn Ibrahim Iji, a little-known student of the great fourteenth-century theologian 'Adud al-Din Iji and scion of the Fali-Sirafi family of Shiraz, was the first scholar to undertake this rigorous approach to defining history in prefatory chapters that he included in a larger historical work in Arabic dedicated to Timur in October 1397.³⁴ One generation later, Hafiz-i Abru, the Timurid historian of Shahrukh's court, followed this rigorous approach through discussions that he included in a number of his Persian historical works written between 1414 and his death in 1430.³⁵ A generation later, Muhyi al-Din al-Kāfiyaji (d. 1474), an émigré from Anatolia who had settled in Cairo, followed in the intellectual footsteps of these two scholars and situated history among the religious sciences (*al-'ulum al-shar'īya*) in a short monograph entitled *Mukhtasar fi 'ilm al-ta'rikh* (*Digest on the Science of History*).³⁶ A few years later, the prominent

³² Jalāl al-Dīn 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Suyūṭī, *al-Šamārikh fi 'ilm al-ta'rikh: Die Dattelrispen über die Wissenschaft der Chronologie ...*, ed. Christian Friedrich Seybold (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1894).

³³ Neşri, *Cihānnümâ*, 4.

³⁴ The treatise exists as a unique manuscript: Muḥammad ibn Sulaymān al-Kāfiyaji, *Tuhfat al-faḡir ilā sāhib al-sarīr*, SK Ms. Turhan Valide Sultan 231. Zeki Velidi Togan first introduced this work to a scholarly audience in 1954 (Zeki Velidi Togan, "Ortaçağ İslâm Âleminde Tenkidî Tarih Telâkkisi," *İslâm Tetkikleri Enstitüsü Dergisi* 1 (1953): 43–49); Franz Rosenthal subsequently incorporated this treatise in Franz Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography*, 2nd revised edition (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1968), 201–44.

³⁵ Felix Tauer found the inclusion of Hafiz-i Abru's discussion of history in the introduction to three of the Timurid historian's works (Felix Tauer, "Hâfizi Abrû sur l'historiographie," in *Mélanges d'orientalisme offerts à Henri Massé à l'occasion de son 75ème anniversaire* (Tehran: Imprimerie de l'Université de Téhéran, 1963), 10).

³⁶ Muḥammad ibn Sulaymān al-Kāfiyaji, *al-Mukhtaṣar fi 'ilm al-ta'rikh*, ed. Muḥammad Kamāl al-Dīn 'Izz al-Dīn, al-Ṭab'ah 1 (Beirut: 'Ālam al-Kutub, 1990).

Egyptian scholar of *hadith* Shams al-Din al-Sakhawi (d. 1497) composed his own monograph on the subject, in which he sought to defend the suitability of history for study against the accusations of theologians for whom its necessity as a religiously sanctioned body of knowledge remained dubious.³⁷ Finally, in 1512, Bidlisi explored the positions articulated by these earlier historians in his introduction to *The Eight Paradises*.³⁸

Although Muslim scholars had written history since the first centuries of Islam, widespread disagreement remained regarding its nature as a body of knowledge and true relationship to the other sciences. The disagreement stemmed largely from the classification system for the sciences that had been worked out over the centuries. Islamic philosophers, such as al-Farabi (d. 950) and Ibn Sina (d. 1037) undertook the first rigorous efforts to classify the sciences through an adaptation of the Aristotelian system of knowledge. Both al-Farabi and Ibn Sina developed a system of classification, the precepts, problems, and conclusions of which could be formulated on the basis of human reason (*al-'aql*).³⁹ In this way, they both agreed with Aristotle and the subsequent Hellenistic tradition that history could not be considered a science as its concern with individual occurrences in time precluded the possibility of any universal judgment.⁴⁰ Yet the emphasis on human reason as the source of theoretical and practical knowledge posed a challenge to Muslim scholars as it failed to incorporate the well-developed Islamic traditions of learning that were derived from and dependent upon Muhammad's revelation. To resolve this problem, scholars developed a bifurcated system of knowledge that differentiated between rational and revealed/transmitted sciences.⁴¹ Along these lines, at the end of the tenth century, 'Abd al-Latif Muhammad al-Khwarazmi, in

³⁷ Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān Sakhāwī, *al-I'lān bi'l-tawbikh li-man dhamma al-ta'rīkh* (*The Pronouncement of Reproach to Those Who Defame History*), ed. Franz Rosenthal (Baghdad, 1963); Franz Rosenthal noted the importance of both al-Kafiyaji and al-Sakhawi's work on historiography and published their monographs in translation in Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography*.

³⁸ Bidlīsī, *Hasht bihisht*, SK Ms. Ayasofya 3541, 1b–14a.

³⁹ Fārābī, *Iḥṣā' al-'ulūm*, ed. 'Uthmān Amīn (Cairo: Maktabat al-Anjilū al-Miṣrīyah, 1968); Ibn Sīna, *Tis' rasā'il fī al-ḥikmah wa-al-ṭabī'iyat* (Cairo: Maṭba'ah Hindīyah bi-al-Mūsikī, 1908).

⁴⁰ Muḥsin Maḥdī, *Ibn Khaldūn's Philosophy of History: A Study in the Philosophic Foundation of the Science of Culture* (London: G. Allen and Unwin, 1957), 138–39; Dale, *The Orange Trees of Marrakesh*, 2.

⁴¹ For a discussion of the development and harmonization of this bifurcated system, see Gerhard Endress and Abdou Filali-Ansary, *Organizing Knowledge: Encyclopaedic Activities in the Pre-Eighteenth Century Islamic World* (Leiden: Brill, 2006).

his *Mafatih al-'ulum* (*Keys of the Sciences*), divided knowledge between “the sciences of religious tradition and what is joined to them from among the Arabic sciences, and secondly the sciences of the foreign lands of the Greeks and other peoples.”⁴² Although cast in terms of an anthropological distinction between indigenous and foreign learning, the system articulated by al-Khwarazmi largely corresponded to the basic division between rational (*'aqli/hikmi*) and transmitted or revealed (*naqli/ghayr hikmi*) sciences as expounded by most subsequent scholars, including Fakhr al-Din Razi (d. 1210), Qutb al-Din Shirazi (d. 1311), and Ibn Khaldun (d. 1406).⁴³ In most of these schemes, history, if mentioned in the classification system at all, was usually accorded an auxiliary function among certain branches of the religious sciences. Moreover, perhaps as a consequence of the disparate subject matter and concern for particulars that characterized historical inquiry, Muslim encyclopedists had little to say about its purpose.⁴⁴

Consequently, the rigorous considerations of history's place in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries addressed a fundamental concern for historians to legitimize their craft within the wider context of Islamic learning. Such considerations also benefited from a more general reappraisal of the classification system that gathered steam first among scholars working within the religious sciences. Increasingly, these scholars applied Aristotelian principles and terminology to the precise definition of religious bodies of knowledge. Specifically, they accepted the philosophers' assertion that science is differentiated from knowledge through demonstrable proof (*burhan*). Moreover, they concurred that any particular science (*'ilm*) investigates a single specified and clearly defined subject matter (*mawdu'*) and that it endeavors to reach conclusions within that subject matter in a systematic manner.⁴⁵ Increasingly in the fourteenth

⁴² 'Abd al-Laṭīf Muḥammad Khwārizmī, *Mafāṭih Al-'ulūm*, ed. 'Abd al-Laṭīf Muḥammad 'Abd (Cairo: Dār al-Nahḍah al-'Arabīyah, 1978), 5.

⁴³ Fakhr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn 'Umar Rāzī, *Jāmi' al-'ulūm, ya, Ḥadāyiq al-anwār fī ḥaqāyiq al-asār: ma'rūf bih Kitāb-i Sittīnī*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥusayn Tasbīhī (Tehran: Kitābkānah-i Asādī, 1346), 3; Shīrāzī, *Durrat al-tāj li-ghurat al-Dībaj*, ed. Muḥammad Mishkāṭ (Tehran: Chāpkhānah-i Majlis, 1317), 1:71–72; 1332–1406 Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddimat Ibn Khaldūn*, ed. Étienne Quatremère (Beirut: Maktabat Lubnān, 1970), 2:385.

⁴⁴ al-Khwarazmi provides no definition for history, and instead merely catalogs the reigns of rulers throughout the world (al-Khwārizmī, *Mafāṭih al-'ulūm*, 97).

⁴⁵ Abdurrahman Atçıl, “Greco-Islamic Philosophy and Islamic Jurisprudence in the Ottoman Empire (1300–1600): Aristotle's Theory of Sciences in Works of Uṣūl al-Fiqh,” *Osmanlı Araştırmaları/The Journal of Ottoman Studies* 41 (2013): 35; for a thorough discussion of the merits of a broader understanding of science, see David Pingree, “Hellenophilia versus the History of Science,” *ISIS* 83 (1992): 554–63.

century, religious scholars applied this philosophically oriented approach to defining and investigating the traditional Islamic religious sciences; scholars such as ‘Adud al-Din Ijī recast theology (*kalam*) in this mold in the middle of the century,⁴⁶ while many others worked contemporaneously to redefine the orientation of theoretical jurisprudence (*usul al-fiqh*) along these lines.⁴⁷

Concurrent with these developments – and perhaps in some measure as a consequence of them – Muslim scholars began to produce encyclopedias on the sciences with renewed energy.⁴⁸ Some of these enormous projects produced detailed information on specific branches of knowledge, such as Shihab al-Din Ahmad al-Qalqashandī’s (d. 1418) fourteen-volume work on epistolography entitled *Subh al-a‘sha* (*Dawn for the Blind*) or Kamal al-Din Muhammad al-Damiri’s (d. 1405) zoological survey, *Life of Animals*.⁴⁹ Others, such as Shihab al-Din al-Nuwayrī’s *Nihayat al-arab fi funun al-adab* (*The Ultimate Ambition in the Branches of Erudition*) sought to survey the widest range of literary arts in a comprehensive and pleasing manner.⁵⁰ More radically, certain strains within the encyclopedism movement argued for a complete restructuring of the metaphysical underpinnings of Islamic learning as conceived by philosophers, jurists, and Sufis. In this way, ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Bistami’s (d. 1454) *al-Fawa’ih al-miskiyya fi al-fawatih al-makkiyya* (*The Musky Perfumes in the Meccan Openings*) and Sa’in al-Din Turka’s (d. 1432) treatises on the science of letters presented an occult challenge both to the traditional division of the sciences, as well as to its metaphysical

⁴⁶ ‘Adud al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Rahmān ibn Aḥmad Ījī, *Kitāb al-Mawāqif fī ‘ilm al-kalām*, eds. Ibrāhīm al-Dasūqī ‘Aṭiyya and Aḥmad Muḥammad al-Ḥanbūlī (Cairo, 1938); A. I. Sabra, “Science and Philosophy in Medieval Islamic Theology: The Evidence from the Fourteenth Century,” *Zeitschrift für Geschichte der Arabischen-Islamischen Wissenschaften* 9 (1994): 1–43.

⁴⁷ Atçıl, “Greco-Islamic Philosophy,” 35.

⁴⁸ Elias Muhanna, “Why Was the Fourteenth Century a Century of Arabic Encyclopaedism?,” in *Encyclopaedism from Antiquity to the Renaissance*, eds. Jason König and Grege Woolf (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 343–56.

⁴⁹ Aḥmad ibn ‘Alī Qalqashandī, *Kitāb Subh al-a‘shā*, 14 vols. (Cairo, 1331 [1913]); Muḥammad ibn Mūsā Damirī, *Ḥayāt al-ḥayawān al-kubrā*, ed. Ibrāhīm Ṣāliḥ, al-Ṭab‘ah 1, 4 vols. (Damascus, 2005); for a recent assessment of this encyclopedic impulse, see Maaike van Berkel, “Opening up a World of Knowledge: Mamluk Encyclopaedias,” in *Encyclopaedism from Antiquity to the Renaissance*.

⁵⁰ Elias Muhanna, *The World in a Book: al-Nuwayrī and the Islamic Encyclopedic Tradition* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018); for an abridged English translation of al-Nuwayrī’s work, see Shihab al-Din Nuwayrī, *The Ultimate Ambition in the Arts of Erudition: A Compendium of Knowledge from the Classical Islamic World*, ed. and trans. Elias Muhanna (New York: Penguin Books, 2016).

presuppositions.⁵¹ Not surprisingly, in this climate of encyclopedism – both traditional and radical – historians examined the epistemological underpinnings of their craft with renewed rigor and vitality.

If history was a necessary and independent branch of learning, historians had to define its topic (*mas'ala*), purpose (*gharad/ghayat*), and proper subject (*mawdu'*). Muhammad ibn Ibrahim Iji initially developed the formal approach to examining these issues in 1381–82 in a short universal history entitled *Tuhfat al-faqir ila sahib al-sarir* (*The Gift of the Poor One to the Master of the Throne*). This approach was subsequently modified by Hafiz-i Abru in the 1410s, then adapted with small modifications by al-Kafiyaji, al-Sakhawi, and Bidlisi over the next 100 years. Iji's major contribution was to apply the precise and exacting vocabulary of philosophical theology and the etiquette of disputation (*adab al-bahth*) to defining the science of history.

Iji's application of this method to history should come as little surprise. His training tied him to some of the great intellectual luminaries of mid-fourteenth-century Shiraz. At an early age, Iji, known as Shihab in his lifetime, studied under his grandfather, Najm al-Din Isma'il,⁵² patriarch of the Fali-Sirafi family, long-time judge of the province of Fars, and a man whom the great Persian poet Hafiz identified as one of the five most important notables of the Shiraz of his day.⁵³ Perhaps more importantly, Iji spent years studying under 'Adud al-Din Iji, whose *Kitab al-mawaqif fi 'ilm al-kalam* (*The Book of Stations on Speculative Theology*) argued for the Aristotelian-infused approach to theology and became one of the most fundamental texts for its study in subsequent centuries.⁵⁴

Despite such an intellectually auspicious youth, Iji's fortunes declined with those of his family after the establishment of Muzaffarid rule in Shiraz in 1353; little is known after the mid-fourteenth century about his life and the circumstances of the other members of his once great family.⁵⁵ By the late 1390s, he had entered the courtly orbit of Timur, who invested heavily in Samarkand both through the construction of monumental architectural projects and through the resettlement and patronage

⁵¹ On al-Bistami's role in this movement, see Fleischer, "Ancient Wisdom and New Science," 232–43, 329–30; on Turka, see Melvin-Koushki, "The Occult Challenge to Messianism and Philosophy in Early Timurid Iran," 247–76.

⁵² Ijī, *Tuhfat al-faqir*, 67b–68a.

⁵³ John W. Limbert, *Shiraz in the Age of Hafez: The Glory of a Medieval Persian City* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004), 80.

⁵⁴ Ijī, *Tuhfat al-faqir*, 66a.

⁵⁵ Limbert, *Shiraz in the Age of Hafez*, 82.

of learned men. Ijī was eager to secure such patronage, for in 1397 he gathered a number of works that he had written – some of which he penned in the mid-1380s before Timur’s conquest of Fars⁵⁶ – and presented the compendium to the conqueror as a single monograph on history entitled *The Gift of the Poor One to the Master of the Throne*, the explicit purpose of which was to elicit Timur’s notice of its author, who had been dismissed from office and wallowed away in solitude.⁵⁷

Yet the opportunistic tone of Ijī’s dedication and petition is no indication of intellectual vapidty. On the contrary, Ijī applied the precise and exacting vocabulary deployed by his teacher with respect to theology in his effort to define the science of history (*‘ilm al-ta’rikh*).⁵⁸ Accordingly, his work offers a definition of history as science through clear statements of its object (*mawdu’*), purpose (*gharad*), benefits (*fawa’id*), and principles (*mabadi’*). For Ijī, the science of history is “knowledge of what was transmitted concerning the occurrences of the world fixed to particular times, from which a historical report originates.”⁵⁹ Elsewhere in the work, Ijī defines history, or more properly dating (*ta’rikh*) in a strict linguistic sense as “the indication of time,” and in a practical sense as the designation of time for the purpose of defining the relative position between two occurrences.⁶⁰ Its object is created things, especially humankind, and the effects of their activities in the world, while its purpose is study of the conditions of outstanding individuals (*a’yan*), by which Ijī means foremost religious scholars.⁶¹ Ijī’s adaptation of the technical terminology of philosophical theology was directed toward establishing history firmly within the classification of the sciences. To this end, in the first chapter of the work, Ijī presents a discussion of the sciences based upon a trifold division along religious (*al-‘ulum al-shar’iyya*), philosophical (*al-‘ulum al-hikmiyya*), and literary lines (*al-‘ulum al-adabiyya*).⁶² History is one of the subsidiary literary sciences; it is a subset of the science of historical information (*‘ilm al-akhbar*), which, in its consideration of historical events without regard to time, is a broader category than history, properly speaking, which is concerned with fixing past occurrences with dates.⁶³

⁵⁶ Ijī, *Tuhfat al-faqīr*, 79b.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 295a/b.

⁵⁸ Ijī cites his teacher’s *Book of Stations* directly as a source for his historical work, *ibid.*, 70b.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 12b.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 17a.

⁶¹ Ibid., 12b–13a.

⁶² Ibid., 13a–17a.

⁶³ Ibid., 16b.

Whereas Ijī's historical thinking bore the imprint of the scholarly circles from which he emerged as a young man, the historical writing of a younger contemporary, Hafiz-i Abru focused more thoroughly on rulers and political events. Even so, he clearly drew upon Ijī's discursive method. Like Ijī, his fellow Timurid courtier, Hafiz-i Abru distinguishes between history, or more properly dating (*ta'rikh*), and the science of history (*'ilm-i ta'rikh*). In a nod to his predecessor, he defines the term in a strict linguistic sense (*dar lughat*) as the expression of time (*ta'rif-i vaqt*) and in a broader practical sense (*dar istilah*) as the fixed designation of time periods to events.⁶⁴ With respect to the science of history, he sought to establish a definition through an exposition of its quiddity (*mahiyyat*), purpose (*ghayat*), and subject (*maudu'*). As with Ijī's work, the application of philosophical terminology to defining history afforded Hafiz-i Abru's craft the scientific rigor that history had frequently lacked in earlier inventories of the sciences. Hafiz-i Abru was conscious of this possibility, for he begins his exposition on the science of history with the proposition that all sciences are defined in terms of their quiddity, purpose, and substrata.⁶⁵ As this is the case, he asserts that history's subject consists of "the events of the realm of generation and decay through investigation of which one discovers in what regard and at what time they occurred."⁶⁶ However, as a science (*'ilm*), its quiddity is knowledge (*ma'rifat*) of those past events – whether they concern social or natural phenomena – that occurred in the realm of generation and decay.⁶⁷ Yet this definition of history's quiddity precluded the possibility that it could offer its practitioner any universal judgment. For this reason, the purpose of history was consideration and reflection upon that knowledge, through which a historian could discern the appropriate course for future action.⁶⁸ The relationship between historical phenomena, reflection, and future action was a frequently purported benefit of history since at least the eleventh-century historian Miskawayh's assertion that knowledge of history provided an alternative type of experience in worldly matters for its students.⁶⁹ Yet Hafiz-i Abru's assertion that this relationship constituted the fundamental purpose of history as a body of knowledge lent historical

⁶⁴ Ḥāfiz-i Abrū, *Jughbrāfiyā-yi Ḥāfiz Abrū: mushtamil bar jughbrāfiyā-yi ta'rikhī-i diyār-i 'Arab, Maghrib, Andalus, Miṣr va Shām*, 1st edition, ed. Šādiq Sajjādī (Tehran: Bunyān, 1996), 73.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 76.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad Ibn Miskawayh, *Tajārib al-umam*, ed. Leone Caetani (Leiden: E. J. Brill; printed for the Trustees of "E. J. W. Gibb Memorial," 1909), 1–2; Tarif Khalidi,

inquiry a new level of rigor. In fact, this conception of history's purpose closely resembles the purpose of Ibn Khaldun's self-proclaimed new science of culture (*'ilm al-'umran*) as he outlined it in the *Muqaddima* (*Prolegomenon*).⁷⁰ Whereas Ibn Khaldun sought to move beyond history by establishing a science that would uncover the underlying forces that informed historical developments through rational consideration of historical occurrences, Hafiz-i Abru, a contemporary of Ibn Khaldun, arrived at a similar conclusion, yet maintained that such an objective was in fact the proper purpose of history.⁷¹ In other words, Ibn Khaldun's science of culture remained for Hafiz-i Abru the appropriate conception of history as a scientific enterprise.

This formal approach of Iji and Hafiz-i Abru to defining history in linguistic and practical terms and identifying its purpose and subject as a body of knowledge remained a basic feature of the subsequent considerations of history in the fifteenth century. However, whereas Hafiz-i Abru sought to define history as a science, the benefits of which primarily accrued to kings seeking counsel, the reflections of al-Kafiyaji and al-Sakhawi in the middle of the fifteenth century tended toward Iji's emphasis and stressed the necessity of history for the religious sciences. Such emphasis reflected the more immediate scholarly milieu of the two men in fifteenth-century Cairo. Al-Kafiyaji had immigrated to Cairo from his place of birth in Bergama (Pergamon) to continue his studies. He stayed on in the city and held teaching positions at several prestigious institutions in the Mamluk capital.⁷² Over the course of his career, al-Kafiyaji, perhaps following the earlier impulse of religious scholars to define their subjects in exacting philosophical terms, penned a number of short treatises that took up consideration of individual disciplines. Some of these were well recognized, if poorly defined, bodies of knowledge, such as history, while others, such as the science of the legal school (*'ilm al-madhhab*),⁷³ seemed, in the critical tone of his colleague

Arabic Historical Thought in the Classical Period. Cambridge Studies in Islamic Civilization (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 170–76.

⁷⁰ Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddimat Ibn Khaldūn*, 60–62.

⁷¹ Mahdi, *Ibn Khaldūn's Philosophy of History*, 71, 288–89; Dale, *The Orange Trees of Marrakesh*, 2–4.

⁷² On al-Kafiyaji's biography, see Kasım Şulul, *İslâm Düşüncesinde Tarih Tasavvuru Usûlü* (İstanbul: İnsan Yayınları, 2008); for remarks of his contemporaries, see especially al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍaw' al-lāmi'*, 7:259–61.

⁷³ Atçıl, "The Formation of the Ottoman Learned Class and Legal Scholarship, 1300–1600," 218.

al-Sakhawi, to be fanciful inventions of their author.⁷⁴ Yet even if al-Sakhawi criticized al-Kafiyaji for overenthusiasm in some areas, he clearly agreed with his impulse with respect to history, for a few years after al-Kafiyaji completed his short monograph on the science of history, al-Sakhawi presented his own thinking on the subject in a work entitled *I'lan bi'l-tawbikh li-man dhamma al-ta'rikh* (*The Pronouncement of Reproach to Those Who Defame History*).

Both of these scholars undertook their considerations of history in an effort to remedy their forebears' exclusion of historiography from the necessary branches of learning. Al-Kafiyaji writes that although the ancients were able to dispense with a codification of history, this neglect does not suggest that history should be excluded from the classification of the sciences. Rather, he writes, "it is a science just like the other codified sciences, such as jurisprudence, grammar, style, and the like. It is, therefore, needed just like the other branches of learning."⁷⁵ Similarly, al-Sakhawi defended history against those religious scholars ('*ulama'*) who found fault with history and historians by showing its proven instructiveness and proclaiming its status among the fundamental branches of learning.⁷⁶ While a defense of history's status as science ('*ilm*') constituted the primary objective of al-Kafiyaji and al-Sakhawi's discourse, like Hafiz-i Abru, the two Egyptian scholars initiated their discussion of history through an exploration of the concept in its linguistic and practical senses. Because they sought to defend history's status as science, they also codified the study of history through a definition of its subject (*mawdu'*) and problems (*masa'il*). All three scholars agreed that history's subject concerned past events in the realm of generation and decay, yet unlike Hafiz-i Abru, neither of the Egyptian historians attributed to the science of history an ability to elucidate underlying causes for events as they unfolded in time. For al-Kafiyaji, history's subject was remarkable events, while al-Sakhawi identified its subject as man and time.⁷⁷ However, even as they denied history an ability to pronounce universal judgments, they argued

⁷⁴ Al-Sakhawi praises al-Kafiyaji for his mastery of a wide array of sciences, but adds that "he perhaps concocted a few sciences (*rubbama ikhtara'a ba'd al-'ulum*)" (al-Sakhawī, *al-Daw' al-lāmi'*, 7:261).

⁷⁵ al-Kāfiyājī, *al-Mukhtaṣar fī 'ilm al-ta'rikh*, 66; Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography*, 252.

⁷⁶ al-Sakhawī, *al-I'lān bi'l-tawbikh li-man dhamma al-ta'rikh*, 6; for an English translation, see Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography*, 270.

⁷⁷ al-Kāfiyājī, *al-Mukhtaṣar fī 'ilm al-ta'rikh*, 65; al-Sakhawī, *al-I'lān bi'l-tawbikh li-man dhamma al-ta'rikh*, 7.

for its basic necessity within the framework of Islamic learning. In particular, al-Kafiyaji went so far as to argue for history's status as a joint obligation of the Islamic community (*fard al-kifaya*).⁷⁸ Similarly, al-Sakhawi argued for the obligatory nature of some aspects of history and acknowledged the fact that some scholars categorized history as a communal obligation.⁷⁹ As such, both men couched their considerations of history's benefits in terms of its necessity in confirming the basic facts upon which the conclusions of jurisprudence and other religious sciences were based.

The differences between the positions taken by Iji, Hafiz-i Abru, and the two scholars in Egypt largely derived from the varying audiences the authors had in mind as they framed their remarks on the science of history. While all four of the scholars recognized the alternate positions of the others as valid, they emphasized certain aspects of history in accordance with their particular intellectual and professional proclivities. As such, Hafiz-i Abru, who wrote his chronicle for a Timurid courtly audience, stressed those aspects of history that would accrue to the benefit of kings. History, for Hafiz-i Abru, was the science *par excellence* for formulating political counsel and deciding future policy. Alternatively, the other three scholars' immersion in the scholarly scene of their day motivated them to frame their remarks on history in religious and jurisprudential terms.

Bidlisi's particular approach to discussing history's meaning and purpose clearly reflects the broader currents in Islamic historiography exemplified by these four earlier scholars. Indeed, as a consequence of his particular education and travels, Bidlisi was possibly familiar with the specific ideas on history expounded by Iji, Hafiz-i Abru, al-Kafiyaji, and al-Sakhawi. Although Iji's work is now known only in a single manuscript copy, there are some indications that, in the fifteenth century at least, it enjoyed geographically broad circulation. Despite its author's generally obscure status, the Ottoman court kept one copy of his *Gift of the Poor One* in the palace library at the turn of the sixteenth century.⁸⁰ It is entirely possible that Bidlisi came across the work while writing his history during the reign of Bayezid II. He certainly would have been familiar with Hafiz-i Abru's histories of Timur and Shahrukh, as these works constituted some

⁷⁸ He writes: "knowledge of [history] is necessary as a community duty, like the necessity of the other sciences, for it establishes the chronology of the whole course of the universe in the best possible manner" (al-Kāfiyājī, *al-Mukhtaṣar fī 'ilm al-ta'rikh*, 66–67).

⁷⁹ al-Sakhāwī, *al-I'lān bi'l-tawbikh li-man dhamma al-ta'rikh*, 47; *ibid.*, 263.

⁸⁰ Török F59, 93b.

of the most important sources for historians of this period. In fact, even at the end of the sixteenth century, the Ottoman historian Mustafa ‘Āli reserved special praise for Hafiz-i Abru within his enumeration of Timurid-era historians.⁸¹ Bidlisi, with his pronounced interest in Timurid history, likely studied Hafiz-i Abru’s works.⁸² His connections to the Egyptian scholars are also apparent. Al-Kafiyaji’s work on history gained a modicum of popularity, both in Egypt and in Ottoman lands. Al-Sakhawi, who lived and worked primarily in Cairo, mentions al-Kafiyaji’s treatise in his own work on history.⁸³ Similarly, like Ijī’s *Gift of the Poor One*, the inclusion of two references to al-Kafiyaji’s treatise in the inventory of Bayezid II’s library compiled in 1502–3 attests to the circulation of the work in Ottoman lands during the years of Bidlisi’s residence at Bayezid’s court.⁸⁴ Most significantly, Bidlisi began to compose his own ideas on history shortly after he spent several months in Cairo on his way to Mecca for pilgrimage in 1511.⁸⁵ As an itinerant scholar of some renown who had himself recently completed a major dynastic history of the Ottomans, Bidlisi’s participation in the learned debates hosted by the Mamluk sultan Qansawh al-Ghawri likely touched upon his own work and ideas on history. In this context, the historical thought of al-Kafiyaji and al-Sakhawi would have represented important points of discussion for Bidlisi’s Egyptian interlocutors.

Not surprisingly then, when Bidlisi sat down to write the introduction to *The Eight Paradises* while residing in Mecca in 1512, he included a discussion of the meaning and epistemological place of history that engaged the works of these earlier scholars in several respects. Like his immediate forebears, Bidlisi sought to dignify history by locating it within

⁸¹ ‘Āli, *Kūnhū’l-aḥbār*, 1:19.

⁸² Charles Melville situates Hafiz-i Abru’s work within one of the two major strands of Persian historical writing that were most frequently emulated and acknowledged (Melville, “The Historian at Work,” 99).

⁸³ al-Sakhāwī, *al-I’lān bi’l-tawbīkh li-man dhamma al-ta’rīkh*, 36–37; Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography*, 318.

⁸⁴ The inventory records the titles of the two separate manuscripts as *al-Mukhtaṣar al-mufīd fī ‘ilm al-ta’rīkh*, Török F 59, 94a, 95a. These two manuscripts are currently located in the Ayasofya collection of the Süleymaniye Library. Both works were completed in al-Kafiyaji’s lifetime in 1460 and 1464. Moreover, both include the seal of Sultan Bayezid II (Muhyi al-Dīn al-Kāfiyājī, *Kitāb al-Mukhtaṣar al-mufīd fī ‘ilm al-ta’rīkh*. SK Mss. Ayasofya 4438 and Ayasofya 3403). For further details on these manuscripts, see Christopher Markiewicz, “History as Science: The Fifteenth-Century Debate in Arabic and Persian,” *JEMH* 21 (2017): 238–39.

⁸⁵ Bidlisi states that he completed the introduction in Mecca in 1512 in an autographed copy of *The Eight Paradises* (Ayasofya 3541, 14a).

the broad classification of the sciences. Although he departed from the rigorous formal efforts to define history's problem, purpose, and subject, he reproduced aspects of these definitions in a new format. Bidlisi organized his discussion of history around three separate discourses (*abvab*) that defined history, located it among the sciences, and defended its status as a necessary and desirable branch of learning for both courtly audiences and religious scholars.

The first discourse (*fath al-bab-i avval*) presents an abbreviated discussion of history's definition in both its linguistic and practical sense and establishes its relationship to the other bodies of knowledge that are concerned with temporal occurrences. In this way, Bidlisi followed in the intellectual path of the four earlier historians by defining history linguistically as the expression of time. However, he departed from these scholars, insofar as his characterization of the practical definition (*ism-i rasmi*) of history focused on developing an understanding of the science of history (*'ilm-i ta'rikh*). Here, Bidlisi inclines toward the more modest claims of Ijī, al-Kafiyajī, and al-Sakhawī and concludes that the science of history is "a science through knowledge (*ma'rifat*) of which the conditions of temporal occurrences are obtained."⁸⁶ By focusing on history as knowledge, Bidlisi deemphasized Hafiz-i Abru's strong assertion that history contained the possibility for insight into the underlying forces that inform events. While in later discourses Bidlisi acknowledges this aspect of history, his primary definition of the science reproduces a more traditional understanding.⁸⁷

Even if this more traditional understanding of history seems to limit its claim as a veritable science capable of making universal judgments, Bidlisi distinguishes history by characterizing it as the loftiest branch of the Arabic sciences (*'ulum-i 'arabiya*). In the beginning of the second discourse, Bidlisi situates history among the twelve Arabic sciences that consist of a hierarchical ordering of bodies of knowledge concerned with language.⁸⁸ The lower sciences in this category concern more basic aspects of language: knowledge of speech, conjugation, etymology, grammar, meaning, and syntax. These basic linguistic building blocks constitute the basis upon which the more advanced Arabic sciences are elaborated. Consequently, the upper branches, which include poetry, prose writing, prosody, rhyme, and epistolography, are only accessible through mastery of the more basic sciences. Bidlisi locates history as a branch of the

⁸⁶ Bidlīsī, *HB*, 11b.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 13b.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 11b.

culminating linguistic science, which he identifies as the rhetorical sciences (*'ilm-i muhazarat*).⁸⁹ For Bidlisi, rhetoric was primarily concerned with investigating the modes of discourse and dialogue within the polite gathering of refined notables. It constitutes the summation of the Arabic sciences, because, by their varied nature, conversations taken up at polite gatherings require a refined handling of a vast array of subjects. Indeed, in Bidlisi's estimation, only through mastery of rhetoric can one be described as a fully eloquent and virtuous master of language. In this understanding of rhetoric, history represented the most complete application of the science.⁹⁰

Bidlisi's third discourse on history argues for its necessity for men concerned with both worldly and otherworldly matters. Specifically, Bidlisi sought to establish the necessity of history on the basis of revelation and reason, and argued for its preeminent status among both religious scholars and statesmen. He organized the discourse around two proofs and seven addresses (*khitabat*). The proofs establish knowledge of dating and history as a fundamental aspect of both citted society and the religious law, while the seven addresses develop these arguments by examining the specific benefits that accrue to statesmen and pious individuals who concerned themselves with acquiring knowledge of the subject.⁹¹

The effects of these historical discourses of the fifteenth century were widely registered in the general views of Ottoman scholars of later generations. Increasingly, in the wake of this fifteenth-century discourse, scholars came to accept history's place within the pantheon of the sciences. The two most popular sixteenth-century Ottoman classifications of the sciences – Taşköprizade's *Miftah al-sa'ada* (*The Key of Bliss*) and Nev'i Efendi's *Netayici'l-fünun* (*The Consequences of the Arts*) – both included history in their catalogs and adopted the formal approach to defining the subject as worked out in the fifteenth-century discourses on the matter.⁹² In the seventeenth century, the great Ottoman polymath

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ In this regard, Bidlisi writes: "It is verified that perfection of rhetoric cannot be accomplished without obtaining the science of history, because, we consider that if [the science of history] is a branch of rhetoric, then rhetoric is more general than history and if it is a section and part of rhetoric, we consider knowledge of history necessary for rhetoric, because it is the most complete section and part of rhetoric" (ibid., 12a).

⁹¹ Ibid., 12a–14b.

⁹² Aḥmad ibn Muṣṭafā Taşköprüzade, *Miftāḥ al-sa'āda wa-miṣbāḥ al-siyāda fī mawḍū'āt al-'ulūm*, eds. Kāmil Bakrī and 'Abd al-Wahhāb Abū al-Nūr (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Ḥadīthah, 1968), 1:252; Nev'i Efendi, *İlimlerin özü: Netayic el-Fünun*, ed. Ömer Tolgay (Istanbul: İnsan Yayinlari, 1995), 85.

Katib Çelebi similarly accepted the fifteenth-century definitions and included them in his massive biobibliographical work.⁹³ The widespread and lasting acceptance of the fifteenth-century discourses and their incorporation into the main strands of Ottoman historical thought therefore underscore the extent to which Ottoman developments were intimately bound to the broader currents of Islamic intellectual history. In the example of Bidlisi's *The Eight Paradises*, we may register clearly how basic ideas about the meaning of history – first developed in Iran, then adopted in Egypt – became the standard approach in Ottoman lands in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

THE CANON OF CONVENTIONAL HISTORICAL WRITING AT THE OTTOMAN COURT

In contrast to his immediate forebears, Bidlisi's remarks on the theoretical aspects of history emphasize its utility to both courtly and scholarly audiences. Moreover, his emphasis on the relationship between history and rhetoric marked a distinct shift from the earlier conversations that sought to define history in relation to practical philosophy or the religious sciences. In some measure, this emphasis on the rhetorical potential of history would become a distinct feature of Ottoman historical writing in the sixteenth century, and, by extension, one of Bidlisi's major legacies.

As Bidlisi composed *The Eight Paradises*, he actively incorporated his theoretical understanding of history into his writing. As such, he fully embraced history as the preeminent Arabic (linguistic) science and endeavored to produce a work that not only would recount the past deeds of Ottoman sultans, but also serve as a model of style and taste for its audience. In this way, he hoped to offer a nascent Ottoman court culture the fully developed chancery style (*insha'*) of historical writing, the pre-eminent approach to Persian historical writing that had prevailed since the latter decades of the twelfth century. Bidlisi's insistence on expressing historical accounts in the florid and luxuriant language of Persian chanceries was not universally embraced by his Ottoman audience when he presented his history to Bayezid II in 1506. In fact, the ambivalent response highlighted a shifting stylistic and linguistic terrain within

⁹³ Kâtib Çelebi, *Kashf al-Zumûn* (Istanbul, 1941–43), 1:271; for a discussion of Ottoman historical thought in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, see Hagen and Menchinger, "Ottoman Historical Thought," 92–106.

Ottoman domains in the first decades of the sixteenth century. Although Bidlisi's approach received criticism in the immediate reception of *The Eight Paradises*, his literary views on historical writing ultimately were accepted within the Ottoman historiographic tradition.

The chancery style to which Bidlisi subscribed reflected his professional outlook as a state secretary in both the Aqquyunlu and Ottoman courts. Since the rise of historical writing in Persian in the tenth century, the involvement of chancery officials in the production of dynastic chronicles had constituted a prominent feature within the historiographical tradition. These officials brought their professional attributes as masters of refined expression to the activity of writing history. One of the basic features of this chancery style concerned what Julie Scott Meisami has termed a poeticization of prose. Specifically, historical accounts increasingly incorporated poetic features, such as "parallelism of members (often with internal rhymes), and the use of figures of speech, especially metaphor and tropes."⁹⁴ In addition to promoting this poetic aspect of historical prose writing, historians also sought to bolster the didactic credentials of their narratives by interpolating quotations from a variety of authoritative sources, including the Quran, *hadith*, proverbs, and poetry.⁹⁵ While this style coexisted with a simpler approach to historical narrative in the first centuries of historical writing in Persian, by the Ilkhanid period in the latter half of the thirteenth century, the chancery style completely dominated the historiographical landscape. In addition to this general context, Bidlisi's espousal of this style was also conditioned by his twenty years of service in the Aqquyunlu chancery, during which time he developed his own reputation as a master stylist whose composition of ornate sultanic rescripts and missives were lauded for their seamless integration of the full range of rhetorical technique. Not surprisingly then, in his approach to writing history at the Ottoman court in the first decade of the sixteenth century, Bidlisi not only accepted the literary parameters imposed by this chancery style, but strove to leave his own mark on the tradition as well. In his explanation for why he wrote a dynastic history of the Ottoman house, he states that he focused on producing "a work of eloquent style and a composition of appropriate elegance and wit appealing to the elite and common people, which would be able to inform on virtuous actions and the great conquests of the warriors in the faith and astonish the views of

⁹⁴ Julie Scott Meisami, "History as Literature," in *Persian Historiography*, ed. Charles Melville, A History of Persian Literature, vol. X (London: I. B. Tauris, 2012), 21.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

the eloquent masters of the age.”⁹⁶ The explicit intention of the work was therefore twofold: to serve as a record of past events and to exemplify the attributes of fine literary expression. But beyond these goals, Bidlisi hoped that his work would rival those of the most highly regarded historians of the preceding three centuries. Here too, Bidlisi explicitly stated his objective, namely, that his chronicle would be considered a supplement to and an equal of the finest histories of the Ilkhanid and Timurid courts, including the works of Juvayni, Vassaf, Mu‘in al-Din Yazdi, and Sharaf al-Din Yazdi.⁹⁷ The remark is revealing, not only because it enumerates Bidlisi’s stylistic models, but also because it suggests a keen desire to situate his own work within a specified canon of Persian historical literature.⁹⁸ In this sense, Bidlisi’s mission was to transport the best literary qualities of this canon to new geographic and historiographic terrain through its application in an Ottoman context.

The effects of this outlook can be seen in all of the historiographical work that Bidlisi undertook among the Ottomans. His works make frequent reference to the authoritative sources and varied epistemological perspectives embraced by practitioners of the chancery style of historical writing. Indeed, in addition to regular citation of Quranic verses, prophetic traditions, and celebrated lines of poetry, he frequently grounds his historical observations within distinct philosophical, astrological, or mystical frameworks that either explain the structure of historical phenomena or motivated his readers to assume an ethical stance.⁹⁹ This variegated approach to writing history creates a patchwork of sacred references, literary allusions, and conceptual expositions that Bidlisi used to substantiate, elaborate, and embellish his narrative.

Despite the diverse assortment of references, Bidlisi’s historical work maintained a coherent focus through its repeated and explicit claim to laud the Ottoman dynasts as the greatest rulers of Islamic history.¹⁰⁰ This understanding of history as praise reflected both the specific patronage environment in which he lived and worked, as well as the general mode in which the chancery style of historiography was most frequently expressed,

⁹⁶ Bidlīsī, *HB*, 8a.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 8b.

⁹⁸ Charles Melville has singled out these historians as three of the four historians most frequently cited models for subsequent historical writing in Persian, Melville, “The Historian at Work,” 99.

⁹⁹ Chapter 6 explores Bidlisi’s use of these frameworks in relation to his political thought.

¹⁰⁰ One of the two introductions of *The Eight Paradises* treats explicitly the reasons for the superiority of the Ottoman sultans (Bidlīsī, *HB*, 14b–17a).

and underscores the extent to which historical works acted as potent vehicles of ideological discourse. For Bidlisi, such a discourse focused on two aspects of Ottoman rule – justice and martial prowess – which he weaves through the eight books of his history, *The Eight Paradises*. In fact, Bidlisi embeds these themes, especially in opposition to non-Muslim rulers, in the title and narrative structure that he gave to his history. While he informally referred to his history of the Ottomans as *The Eight Paradises*, he formally entitled the work *The Eight-Fold Attributes concerning Accounts of the Ottoman Caliphs and Caesars* (*al-Sifat al-samaniya fi akhbar al-khulafa' va'l-qayasira al-'usmaniya*). *The Eight-Fold Attributes* refers both to the eight Ottoman sultans up to and including Bidlisi's patron Sultan Bayezid II and the specific qualities (*sifat*) that marked them as exceptionally distinguished rulers. Throughout the history, Bidlisi discusses in great detail the nature and number of these qualities and argues that all of the Ottoman sultans possessed them and passed them on in succession to their sons. This point is substantiated through the various worthy deeds and good works undertaken by the Ottoman sultans and enumerated and described by Bidlisi in his history. In this way, Bidlisi's commemoration of their deeds serves not only to establish their lasting memory (*zikhri-jamil*), but also acts as a sustained argument for their possession of the caliphal and Roman imperial inheritances as manifest through their superiority in deed and disposition over other Muslim rulers.¹⁰¹

The structure that Bidlisi elaborates in his history also served to reinforce these claims. Bidlisi divided his history into eight books, one for each Ottoman sultan, and termed each book a phalanx (*katiba*). The martial terminology of its subsections was carried further within each of the eight volumes. Each phalanx generally consists of an introduction or advanced party (*muqaddima*), prefatory remarks or vanguards (*tali'a*), and a number of stories (*dastan*), which contain accounts of the principal military campaigns of each sultan. Adopting this structure enabled him to include a number of theoretical discussions and thematic overviews for each sultan's reign in the context of the separate prefaces and introductions, while also providing a flexible format for the elaboration of their actions and deeds in the context of the various stories of each book. He further elaborated the last two phalanxes – those devoted to Sultan Mehmed II and Sultan Bayezid II – by dividing the stories between campaigns against Christian rulers, which Bidlisi calls the left wing

¹⁰¹ For further consideration of this reading of *The Eight Paradises*, see Chapter 6.

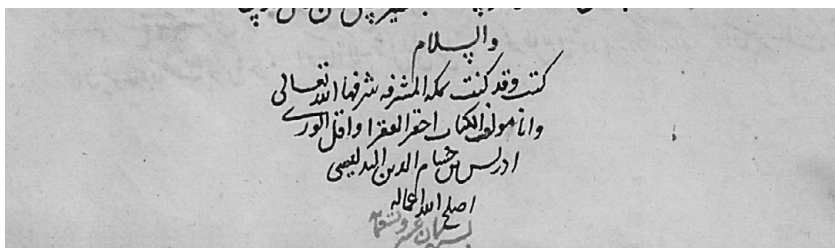


FIGURE 5.1 Autographed colophon of the introduction to *The Eight Paradises*, which Bidlisi completed while in Mecca in 1512.

Süleymaniye Library, Ayasofya 3541, 14a

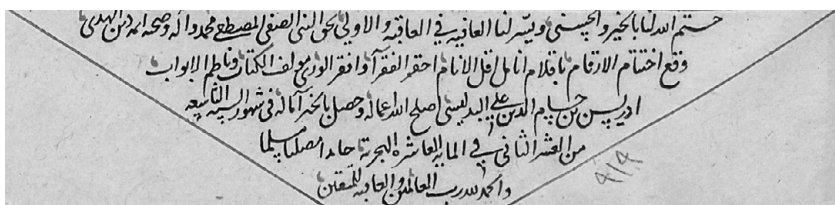


FIGURE 5.2 Autographed colophon of the conclusion to *The Eight Paradises*, which Bidlisi completed upon his return to the Ottoman court in 1513–14.

Nuruosmaniye Library Ms. 3209, 636a

(*maysara*), and campaigns against Muslim rulers which he terms the right wing (*maymana*).¹⁰² These references to battle order helped emphasize the military prowess of the Ottoman sultans. Organizing the stories around military campaigns allowed Bidlisi to highlight the efforts of Ottoman sultans to expand the domains of Islam.

¹⁰² In addition to the right and left wings included in the volumes on Mehmed II and Bayezid II, Bidlisi also included in his section on Mehmed a middle guard (*galb-i katiba*), which enumerates the sultan's qualities, other contemporary rulers, the bases of his authority, and the organization of his household and army. For the organization of Bayezid's volume, Idris divided the main body of the volume into two discussion (*ba'is*), the first of which detailed Bayezid's exploits, as elaborated by the right and left wings, and the second of which was divided between two flanks (*janah*), one that presented biographical entries for Bayezid's sons and another that presented biographical entries on high statesmen who served the sultan. For an overview of the contents of *The Eight Paradises*, see Franz Babinger, *Die Geschichtsschreiber der Osmanen und ihre Werke* (Leipzig: O. Harrassowitz, 1927); Muhammad İbrahim Yıldırım, "İdris-i Bitlisi, Heşt Behişt VII. Ketibe, Sultan Mehmed Devri, 1451–1481" (Ph.D., İstanbul Üniversitesi, 2010), LII–LXI.

In this respect, Bidlisi's division of Mehmed and Bayezid's campaigns between left and right wings would seem to highlight unnecessarily the unsavory reality of Ottoman conquest of Muslim rulers' territories in the east. In fact, in introducing the first story of the right wing in the book on Mehmed II, Bidlisi recognized this dilemma and justified Ottoman campaigns against fellow Muslim polities as an unfortunate, yet necessary requirement of just rule in the geopolitical context of the mid-fifteenth century. He notes that, while it was true that Mehmed and other sultans fought against Muslim rulers, these wars were justified, as they were the consequence of rebellious and insubordinate behavior, which led to the oppression of Muslims.¹⁰³ In this way, the division between campaigns against Christian and Muslim rulers ultimately served to underscore Bidlisi's principal contentions: the Ottoman sultans were not only the champions of the true faith through their efforts to expand the domains of Islam, but they were also defenders of justice through their watchful and occasionally vengeful stance against oppressive Muslim rulers. This nuancing of the Ottoman image as warrior in the faith was a necessary consequence of the late fifteenth-century political landscape, in which the Ottomans increasingly found themselves drawn into conflicts with their Muslim neighbors in the east.

Yet even if the overarching structure of Bidlisi's history afforded opportunities to advance ideological claims and legitimize military action, the more literary concepts exhibited by the chancery style could also reinforce Bidlisi's central contentions in more subtle and pervasive ways. In fact, throughout his literary and historical works, Bidlisi references and elaborates a single historical and literary concept grounded in the canons of Persian poetry and prose that describes the interrelated dimensions of events in history, historiographical production, courtly patronage, and good governance. The concept, referred to most frequently by Bidlisi as *zīkr-i jamīl*, refers to the lasting renown of an individual's actions in the world and the memorialization of those actions in prose or verse. Bidlisi regularly deployed the term throughout his nearly twenty years of historical writing in Ottoman lands. The concept plays a central role in the panegyric that Bidlisi used as a vehicle to propose writing *The Eight Paradises* in 1502.¹⁰⁴ In the introduction and in several significant places in his history, he returns to the concept to elaborate its various dimensions. Finally, in the last years of his life, when he returned to writing the history

¹⁰³ Bidlīsī, *HB*, 390b.

¹⁰⁴ Chapter 2 discusses this panegyric. Bidlīsī, *Munāẓara-yi rūza va 'īd*, 25a.

of Selim's reign, he recast *zīkr-i jamīl* as the central distinguishing characteristic of the Ottoman dynasty and used the concept to explain the rise of historical writing in Ottoman lands.

In some ways, Bidlisi's embrace of the concept simply highlights the extent to which his work was grounded in the broader conventions of the Persian literary tradition. Since the resurgence of Persian court poetry in the tenth century, poets focused on the immortalizing aspect of their verse as one of its greatest benefits for their patrons. In the twelfth century, Nizami 'Aruzi, the secretary and poet of the Ghurid court, prominently featured the concept in *The Four Discourses*, his four reflections on a king's indispensable men. In the second discourse on the importance of poets, after an anecdote on the power of poetry to prompt great deeds, Nizami 'Aruzi concludes: "a king cannot dispense with a good poet, who shall conduce to the immortality of his name, and shall record his fame in *diwāns* and books."¹⁰⁵ More than simple flattery, the praise of panegyrics thus elevated the poet's task to immortalization of his patron.¹⁰⁶ In fact, poetry, since it remains lodged in men's minds for time immemorial, represents a sounder and more secure edifice upon which kings could construct their legacy.¹⁰⁷ In recognition of this fact, kings who sought immortality were obliged to remunerate their poets. As the fourteenth-century poet, Hafiz, reminds his reader: "The poet exalts your noble deeds to the skies / Do not begrudge him his stipend and travelling provisions. / Since you seek good repute, let me say this: / Do not begrudge silver and gold as the price of discourse."¹⁰⁸

But beyond immortality for the patron and remuneration for the poet, *zīkr-i jamīl* offered a similar renown for the poet and his verse. In the introduction to *Gulistan (The Rose Garden)*, Sa'di references *zīkr-i jamīl*

¹⁰⁵ Nizāmī 'Arūzī, *Chahār Maqāla (The Four Discourses) of Nidhāmī-i 'Arūdī-i Samarqandī*, trans. Edward Granville Browne (London: Published by the Trustees of the E. J. W. Gibb Memorial, 1978), 45.

¹⁰⁶ Julie Scott Meisami, *Medieval Persian Court Poetry* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987), 47.

¹⁰⁷ As Nizami 'Aruzi suggests by contrasting Mahmud Ghaznavi's palaces with the poet 'Unsuri's verse, the legacy conferred by poetry far outlasts any physical monument: "How many a palace did great Mahmūd raise / At whose tall towers the Moon did stand and gaze / Whereof one brick remaineth not in place / Though still re-echo 'Unsuri's sweet lays" (Nizāmī 'Arūzī, *Chahār Maqāla (The Four Discourses) of Nidhāmī-i 'Arūdī-i Samarqandī*, 48).

¹⁰⁸ Meisami, *Medieval Persian Court Poetry*, 45; Ghazal 247, Ḥāfiz, *Divān-i Khvājah Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad Ḥāfiz Shīrāzī*, eds. Muḥammad Qazvīnī and Qāsim Ghanī (Tehran: Kitābfurūshī-i Zavvār, 1950), 168.

once in relation to his patron's powers. In fact, he attributes directly "the good things people say about Sa'di (*zīkr-i jamīl-i Sa'di*) and the renown of his poetry that has spread across the face of the earth" to the favorable glances and praise that he has received from his patron.¹⁰⁹ In contrast to later uses of the term by historians, *zīkr-i jamīl*, for Sa'di, referred simply to the good reputation and renown of his work in his own day.¹¹⁰ Such a temporally delimited understanding of the term does not suggest that Sa'di ignored the lasting quality of literature. In fact, according to his preface, his initial inspiration to write the *Rose Garden* was prompted by the thought that, despite the beauty of garden flowers, their impermanence rendered them unworthy of attachment. In contrast, he proposed to write a book called *Rose Garden*, "upon the leaves of which the chill wind of autumn will make no inroad and the springtime harmony of which the vicissitudes of time will never transform into the stridency of autumn."¹¹¹

As Persian historical writing assumed greater literary and poetic aspirations with the development of the chancery style, historians adapted the various uses of a lasting renown to the task of writing and presenting history. All of the valences of *zīkr-i jamīl* were included in historians' discussions of the relationship between history and a lasting renown. The Ilkhanid historian Rashid al-Din includes an anecdote from the reign of the Ilkhanid khan Ghazan that suggests the Chingissid ruler's keen understanding of the impermanence of the world and the importance of undertaking laudable deeds for the sake of a lasting memory.¹¹² Substantially, Hafiz-i Abru devotes a considerable portion of his introduction to expounding on the concept as one of the major benefits of history (*zīkr-i fava'id-i danistan-i ta'rikh*). Clearly, the Timurid historian drew on the conceptual and historical examples of earlier poets, such as Nizami 'Arūzi and Sa'di, as his literary references occasionally drew directly from their works.¹¹³ Yet, for Hafiz-i Abru, the best guarantor of a lasting renown is historical writing, for it is the single phenomenon capable of rescuing for humankind a glimpse of its own past. His discussion focuses on two of the

¹⁰⁹ Sa'di, *The Gulistan (Rose Garden) of Sa'di*, trans. W. M. (Wheeler McIntosh) Thackston (Bethesda, MD: Ibex Publishers, 2008), 3.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 7.

¹¹² On this anecdote, see Judith Pfeiffer, "Conversion to Islam among the Ilkhans in Muslim Narrative Traditions: The Case of Aḥmad Teguder" (Ph.D., The University of Chicago, 2003), 320–24.

¹¹³ For instance, Hafiz-i Abru refers to the example of 'Unsuri's role in spreading the fame of Mahmud of Ghazna cited by Nizami Aruzi, Ḥāfiz-i Abrū, *Jughrafiyā*, 1:82.

aspects of a lasting renown initially articulated by the earlier poets. The first concerned the ability of history to immortalize a patron, while the second aspect reminded patrons of the importance of remunerating historians.

Hafiz-i Abru's exposition on the benefits of a lasting renown begins with the observation that since all worldly exertions are rendered impermanent, the recording of good and charitable deeds becomes desirable. Indeed, he writes:

After the lapse of life, [the quest for dominion] offers no benefit and the name of renowned rulers and prosperous kings, which is the auditor of life's account of the best part of living and is the disseminator of the permanence of everyone, having passed to the earth with the pen of perdition, remains only by means of recording history and writing on the folia of time and the daily account book of day and night.¹¹⁴

For Hafiz-i Abru, history, through the promise of a lasting renown, offers man a second life after his death.¹¹⁵ Yet, beyond a superficial immortalization of a patron, the recording of a ruler's deeds stimulated the virtue of readers of history, since the frequent perusal of good and bad deeds helped inform plans for future action, as the memory of good deeds and the recollection of actions devoid of praiseworthy morals played a prominent role in the councils of kings.¹¹⁶

While Hafiz-i Abru recognized the traditional status of the poet and his panegyric in the acquisition of a lasting renown, he added the historian and his chronicle as equally essential conduits for securing permanent fame. Consequently, Hafiz-i Abru references the well-known relationship between Sultan Mahmud of Ghazna and the poets Firdawsi and 'Unsuri, yet he also mentions the role of the secretary and historian Abu'l-Fath 'Utbi in securing for the Ghaznavid ruler a lasting renown.¹¹⁷ In fact, it is only as a consequence to these litterateurs' efforts that Sultan Mahmud was remembered at all, as "no one brings to mind those kings, during whose reigns people of talent did not thrive and attend to describing their circumstances, their achievements and their conquests."¹¹⁸ Hafiz-i Abru's implication is clear: If a ruler does not encourage the recording of his accomplishments, he will be forgotten. To further substantiate this notion, he points to the "even greater prosperity and acquired glory, nobility,

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 1:80.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 1:81.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 1:80.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 1:82.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

reverence, and respect” that historians found through the patronage of the Abbasid caliphs and the high status of historians afforded by the ancient rulers of Persia.¹¹⁹ In contrast to the vast sums spent on armies and the construction of marvelous buildings, both of which deteriorate with time, the work of a secretary and his reed pen can be purchased for much less, and his work lasts forever.¹²⁰

Perhaps because *zīkr-i jamīl* could play a role in a litterateur’s solicitation of patronage, Bidlisi fully embraced the concept in his personal letters, panegyric poems, and historical writing from the moment he arrived in Ottoman lands in 1502. As a new arrival at court with few personal connections, Bidlisi necessarily relied on his reputation as a skilled poet and author to obtain the attention of Bayezid II and the other leading men of the court. Accordingly, by reminding his audience of the importance of a poet and historian in securing a lasting renown, he employed the well-established conventions of a literary device as a more immediate tool for obtaining patronage. Consequently, in one of the earliest panegyrics that Bidlisi dedicated to the Ottoman sultan, he claims to have fixed the good reputation (*zīkr-i jamīl*) of Bayezid in his mind and requests the opportunity to produce a work in praise of the Ottoman sultan and his forebears.¹²¹ *The Eight Paradises* certainly spread the good reputation of the Ottoman rulers. Yet, Bidlisi also used his composition of the chronicle as a vehicle to leverage the support of other leading statesmen. While writing the history, Bidlisi, in personal correspondence with İskender Pasha, not only reminded the well-placed governor of their friendship, but also proclaimed that he would spread the former vizier’s good reputation in his forthcoming history of the Ottoman dynasty by prominently featuring his deeds in many of the chapters concerning Bayezid’s reign.¹²² This promise of a lasting literary renown for patrons and supporters was part of Bidlisi’s general strategy to make friends and allies in the upper echelons of the Ottoman court. Indeed, in contrast to most Ottoman histories before the sixteenth century, *The Eight Paradises* includes a great many details on the principal officers and statesmen who served Bayezid. While his record of these offices and men ultimately serves to aggrandize the sultan – who, as a patron of such numerous and skilled commanders, scholars, and administrators, is proclaimed a truly great

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 1:83.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 1:84.

¹²¹ Bidlīsī, *Munāẓara-yi rūza va ‘īd*, 25a/b.

¹²² Bidlīsī, *Majmū‘a*. Ms. Esad Efendi 1888, 141a.

ruler – the inclusion of this catalog in Bidlisi's history also demonstrates his effort to preserve their lasting renown. In much the same way that Bidlisi reminded İskender Pasha of the good service that he offered, at the end of his section of Bayezid's officers, he included a note in one of the presentation copies of the chronicle that explained his selection criteria for inclusion in his history: Only those men who had shown personal kindness or favors to him were mentioned.¹²³

But if a lasting renown and appropriate patronage constituted the stock-in-trade of historians and the rulers whom they celebrated, Bidlisi occasionally felt that the rewards he received for lauding the Ottoman house were not commensurate with his lasting achievement. After suffering several years of neglect at court, he obtained permission to undertake the pilgrimage to Mecca in 1511. According to Bidlisi's formal complaint, not only did the court fail to outfit him for this journey in a manner befitting his status, but it also seized and redistributed his usufruct grants within six days of his departure.¹²⁴ Not surprisingly, the concept of a lasting memory and the duties of a patron to his historian figure in Bidlisi's complaint: "Truly, by which rule of the *shari'a* or kingly politesse (*muruvvat-i saltanat*) is it right to repay a debt in this manner to one who, for ten years of his precious life, has labored to resurrect the good mention and spread the worthy deeds of this house?"¹²⁵ So, beyond the deployment of *zīkr-i jamil* as simply an abstract literary convention, Bidlisi consistently employed the concept to mediate his interactions with Bayezid II and the leading Ottoman statesmen.

Bidlisi's practical application of *zīkr-i jamil* in his negotiations with the Ottoman court does not suggest that he viewed the concept as devoid of theoretical significance. On the contrary, *zīkr-i jamil* figures prominently both as a conceptual component of his understanding of history's benefits and as a distinguishing feature of the Ottoman dynasty. Within Bidlisi's exposition on the meaning and nature of the science of history, he presents seven discourses that enumerate the benefits of knowing history. While the first four of these benefits concern the potential of history to help individuals secure a heavenly reward, the last three address the benefits of history for rulers. *Zīkr-i jamil* features in one of these discourses, in which Bidlisi posits its capacity to motivate rulers to develop and act upon ethical habits. For Bidlisi, reading histories, which relate the laudable affairs of

¹²³ Bidlisi, *HB*, 622a.

¹²⁴ TSMA E. 5675.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

past people, helps incline one's moral disposition towards the good. In this way, a ruler, in his youth, is inspired to emulate the great actions of his predecessors, while throughout his reign he will be disposed towards leaving a fitting legacy, as an understanding that "permanence of the end promotes the amassing of an abundant reward, legacy, lasting renown (*zīkr-i jamīl*), and due receipt of praise."¹²⁶

The connection between a lasting renown, reading history, and the cultivation of ethical habits was significant for Bidlīsī and the broader aims of his historical project. Throughout his various works, he insists that the Ottoman sultans hold the divinely appointed vicegerency of the world (*khilāfat-i rahmānī*) through their possession and display of the blessed virtues (*akhlāq-i hamīda*).¹²⁷ From father to son, the Ottoman sultans have passed on these virtues and have consequently reigned as vicegerents. While the vicegerency of the world accrued to the glory of each ruler individually and the dynasty collectively, the upbringing of honest and ethical sons constituted an aspect of a ruler's lasting renown. In his introduction to the reign of Bayezid I, Bidlīsī offers an exegesis of a Quranic verse that, in part, elaborates the connection between ethical conduct and a lasting renown. The verse reminds man that wealth and children are only of value in worldly life, while good deeds are better in God's judgment.¹²⁸ Bidlīsī explores the implications of this verse by analyzing the benefits of wealth, children, and good deeds. He concludes that when one's descendants are brought up possessed of dignity and virtue, "the ripe fruit trees bear fruit for harvest from the permanence of the fortune of the house and the accomplishment of the good deeds of the dynasty. And in the succession of ages and periods, the persistence of lasting renown and excellent virtue grows and strengthens."¹²⁹ For the primary subject of Bidlīsī's history, the Ottoman dynasty, the implication is clear; in addition to the wealth and the record of the good deeds that they have amassed, the unbroken patrilineal succession of one virtuous ruler with another constituted an aspect of the dynasty's lasting renown.

More fundamentally, Bidlīsī deployed the concept of *zīkr-i jamīl* to define a sultan's proper sphere of activity and exhort him to promote good in the world. In the preface to his introductory section on the charitable institutions that Mehmed II endowed in his lifetime, Bidlīsī

¹²⁶ Bidlīsī, *HB*, 14a.

¹²⁷ For further discussion of this point, see Chapter 6.

¹²⁸ *Qur'an*, 18:46.

¹²⁹ Bidlīsī, *HB*, 168b.

distinguishes two methods “to establish the preservation of one’s trace in this worthless world.”¹³⁰ The first path, appropriate to men of profound insight (*arbab-i lubab*), is the preservation of the human soul through the aid of gnosis, since knowledge is the fountainhead of the water of life.¹³¹ The second path is obtaining a lasting renown (*tahsil-i zikr-i jamil*) and perfecting the blessed habits (*takmil-i malakat-i hamida*). The path is appropriate for kings and notables, “because for the kings of the world, the path of God’s acceptance and the way of perfecting the bliss of the two abodes in the age of power and ability is through promoting the causes of obedience to the Quranic injunction: ‘Surely God bids to justice and good-doing.’”¹³²

Yet if good-doing was the basic material that kings used to construct their legacy, rulers were restricted to two types of lasting edifices. At the end of his life, Bidlisi, in his introduction to his history of Selim’s reign, returned to the theme of *zikr-i jamil* to distinguish the Ottoman dynasty from all contemporary rulers. In this context, he remarks that, for kings, a lasting renown is secured either through the construction of charitable institutions in their name – such as mosques, schools, and soup kitchens – or through the patronage of literary works that describe the good deeds of its patron.¹³³ Since physical structures have a tendency to deteriorate over time, a legacy preserved in literature is the firmest and best manner to obtain a lasting renown.¹³⁴ For Bidlisi, the Ottomans were without equal among the rulers of Islam in establishing the profits of a lasting memory, as they endowed numerous charitable institutions and patronized scholars and litterateurs from the far reaches of Islamic lands, who “sent epistles and panegyrics, and epic poems of rhyming couplets to their court detailing their deeds in verse and prose in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish.”¹³⁵ In this manner, according to Bidlisi, *zikr-i jamil* contributed to the development of an Ottoman historiographical tradition. By virtue of the good deeds of the Ottoman sultans, skilled poets and writers throughout the world were motivated to memorialize the Ottoman dynasty in the main literary languages of the central domains of Islam. The widespread praise and multilingual appeal of these historical works stood as testament to the greatness of the dynasty. Yet, in Bidlisi’s estimation, it was not until the

¹³⁰ Ibid., 375a.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Ibid. The Quranic reference is to 16:90.

¹³³ Bidlisi, *Salimshāhmāma*, 18b–19b.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 19b.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

completion of his *The Eight Paradises* – uniquely, a work exhibiting the qualities of the canons of historical writing – that the Ottoman house was appropriately memorialized. Clearly, such qualities reflected a chancery style, which could employ the full range of rhetorical technique to memorialize Ottoman expansion of Islamic lands and articulate its ideal administration. In this sense, Bidlisi conceived of his work as revolutionary. He had brought the best method of expressing historical knowledge in the chancery style favored throughout Persian lands to a new cultural space, where the Ottoman dynasty was in the midst of developing an innovative imperial idiom, which at once expressed itself through unprecedented conquest of new lands, widespread construction of useful and charitable institutions, and the enthusiastic patronage of lasting literature.

Despite the self-congratulatory terms in which Bidlisi assessed his own work, as discussed in Chapter 2, the initial reception of *The Eight Paradises* in this nascent Ottoman imperial context was decidedly mixed. Although his work was lauded by a number of other Persian emigres residing in Ottoman lands in the immediate wake of its presentation, several prominent Ottoman officials pronounced a more skeptical assessment. The objections of Sultan Bayezid's grand vizier, 'Ali Pasha, and his chief military judge, Mü'eyyedzade 'Abdurrahman, assumed several forms, but focused on three interrelated issues concerning content, style, and language.

First, the two statesmen claimed that as Bidlisi's history included long narrative sections on foreign rulers who were the contemporaries of the Ottoman sultans, his work had the unfortunate effect of praising his patrons' rivals.¹³⁶ The basis of their criticism concerned Bidlisi's inclusion of separate sections within the introduction to each of his books on the reign of a single Ottoman sultan, in which he related events pertaining to contemporary rulers in Iran. This approach, in the context of the preexisting Ottoman historiographic tradition, appeared to Bidlisi's audience an affront to the dignity of his patrons. Most Ottoman chronicles that predated Bidlisi's work focused on the history of the dynasty by maintaining a pronounced narrative focus on the individual sultan's conquests and campaigns.¹³⁷ Those few chronicles that situated the Ottomans within the framework of universal history argued for the privileged place of the dynasty by narrating its history as the culminating event in the grand

¹³⁶ Bidlisi, *HB*, 633a.

¹³⁷ See, for example, Aşıkpaşazade, *Die Altosmanische Chronik Des 'Aşıkpaşazade*; Neşri, *Cihânnümâ*.

narrative of world history.¹³⁸ In both cases, if the chronicles considered contemporaries of the Ottoman sultans, they clearly emphasized their subsidiary role in the narrative.¹³⁹ Bidlisi's decision to devote specific sections to contemporary rulers appeared to undermine his express purpose of praising his patrons. Yet, Bidlisi defended his approach as a consequence of two rhetorical strategies. First, he argued for the inclusion of these sections, as the chaotic and destructive events they described ultimately served to substantiate the status of the Ottoman sultans as the preeminent rulers in Islamic domains. Second, he wished to establish the extent of both the friendship and enmity that existed between each Ottoman sultan and his contemporaries.¹⁴⁰

This criticism of Bidlisi's narrative scope was partially the consequence of the second criticism, namely, the gongoristic nature of his prose. As Bidlisi later recounted, the Ottoman officials claimed: "One of its faults is verbosity and prolixity / such that the scribe's reed was unequal to its length."¹⁴¹ This criticism of style cut to the core of Bidlisi's approach to historical writing. In fact, what his critics saw as prolixity, Bidlisi understood as the proper expression of historical accounts. In the introduction to *The Eight Paradises*, Bidlisi identified his work as the first history of the Ottoman house to deal with the subject suitably. While he recognized that a number of chronicles had been written previously in Turkish, he largely dismissed them, as their authors had simply "produced compositions in an abridged and summary manner."¹⁴² Moreover, they failed to treat their subject in appropriate terms: "In the manner of legends, [their works] were devoid of eloquence and elegance of meaning and sweetness and ripeness of expression; rather they brought, unverified accounts of the conquests of warrior kings and the fate of unbelievers."¹⁴³ Bidlisi's counter criticism of Turkish chronicles was derived from his clear conception of the proper relationship between rhetorical eloquence and historical narrative. In defending his approach, he explained clearly what he meant:

¹³⁸ See, for example, Ahmedi, *İskender-Nâme: İnceleme-Tıpkıbasım*, ed. İsmail Ünver (Ankara: Türk Dil Kurumu, 1983); or Shukrullāh, *Bahjat al-tavārikh*, SK Ms. Ayasofya 2990.

¹³⁹ One notable exception in this regard is *Khunkarnama* (*The Book of the Emperor*) of Mu'ali, the latter half of which details the struggles between the Aqquyunlu and Qaraquyunlu in detail (Yıldız, "Ottoman Historical Writing in Persian, 1400–1600," 453–54).

¹⁴⁰ Bidlīsī, *HB*, 633a.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 8a.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

As the histories of great rulers
 Are of a single sort since the time of Adam,
 They are not limited to the mere recounting of events
 Rather every sort of work may be joined to them
 What is eloquence? The practice of speech
 In accordance with the need of every situation
 Sometimes the eloquent one, through the beauty of expression
 Says much with few words
 But sometimes, in praise and description
 He makes one a hundred-fold by description
 As the history of rulers are of this sort,
 The aim of its prolixity is a lasting renown (*zıkr-i jamil*).¹⁴⁴

In these verses, Bidlisi draws on his understanding of history as the broadest and most complete expression of rhetoric to defend his exhaustive approach to historical writing. For Bidlisi, the best histories were those that served as models of expression through their mastery of the widest array of rhetorical and literary artifice. In this sense, Bidlisi judged accusations of prolixity not as a point of criticism, but rather as a mark of his mastery of the tradition.

The final criticism, although not explicitly stated by Bidlisi, concerned the two Ottoman statesmen's reservations regarding Bidlisi's use of Persian for the composition of a dynastic history of the Ottoman sultans. Bidlisi's advocacy of a literary approach to historical writing struck a chord with Mü'eyyedzade, an initial supporter of Bidlisi who eventually became one of his two most vocal critics. For even as the military judge criticized Bidlisi for his bombastic prose, he recognized that treatments of Ottoman history in Turkish would benefit from the application of the chancery style. To this end, even as Bidlisi was composing *The Eight Paradises* for Bayezid, Mü'eyyedzade approached the sultan to elicit his support for the production of another history of the dynasty in an elevated Turkish register. As a consequence of the proposal, Bayezid encouraged one of Mü'eyyedzade's most promising students, Kemalpaşazade, to write a work that "should be resplendent of expression and style in the fashion of Turkish discourse for the general benefit of the elite and common

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 633a.

people.”¹⁴⁵ While Kemalpaşazade’s history would not become as popular as *The Eight Paradises*, its importance as a transformative work within the Ottoman Turkish historiographical tradition was recognized even in the sixteenth century.¹⁴⁶

These criticisms were significant, as they articulated some of the most salient flashpoints of the developing Ottoman historiographical tradition. The objection to an inclusion of contemporary rulers indicated a clear conception of history’s use as an instrument of ideology. If a proper understanding of history’s purpose emphasized its importance in securing a lasting memory (*zîkr-i jamil*) for its principal subject, any discussion of other contemporary rulers threatened to undermine this objective. Bidlisi rejected this criticism by suggesting that the inclusion of other rulers in his history actually accrued to the benefit of his patrons, as any comparison between the two sets of rulers ultimately demonstrated the manifest superiority of the Ottoman sultans.¹⁴⁷ More subtly, the accusation addressed the fundamental issue of the relationship of Ottoman history to other established Muslim historical narratives. Bidlisi’s work – in its style, language, and content – argued for the placement of Ottoman history within the larger narrative framework of the Perso-Islamic historical tradition. Ottoman dynastic histories before Bidlisi – if they considered any larger context at all – situated the rule of the Ottoman sultans within the more narrowly conceived frame of a post-Seljuk Anatolian landscape whose principal actors were limited largely to Turkish lords and Christian princes. Such an emphasis was projected upon the explicit legitimating discourses of these histories, which tended to emphasize Ottoman preeminence in *ghaza*, precedence within the Oğuz Turkic lineage, or inheritance of the Seljuk legacy as the primary aspects of any ideological discourse.¹⁴⁸ To be sure, Bidlisi certainly included these aspects of the Ottoman historical tradition in his narrative, especially in the first book of the history.¹⁴⁹ Yet, the emphasis of his legitimating discourse

¹⁴⁵ Kemalpaşazade, *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osmân*, I. Defter, 37.

¹⁴⁶ Âli, *Muṣṭafā ‘Âlī’s Künhü’l-Aḥbâr and Its Preface according to the Leiden Manuscript*, 36.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Colin Imber, “The Ottoman Dynastic Myth,” *Turcica* 19 (1987): 7–27; Imber, “Ideals and Legitimation in Early Ottoman History”.

¹⁴⁹ Bidlisi principally addresses Oğuz lineage and the Seljuk inheritance in his discursive preface to the reign of ‘Osman (Bidlīsī, *HB*, 24b, 27a, 31b); for analysis of these passages, see Ali Anooshahr, *Turkestan and the Rise of Eurasian Empires: A Study of Politics and Invented Traditions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 28–55; Yılmaz, *Caliphate Redefined*, 232–36.

differed markedly from his predecessors. In contrast, Bidlisi focused on the cosmically ordained and universally applicable signs of Ottoman superiority. Accordingly, the appropriate frame of his Ottoman history was not post-Seljuk Anatolia, but the expansive canvas of Islamic history, especially insofar as it related to the preeminent courts in Iran, which were fully immersed in this alternative discourse on sovereignty. By rejecting any discussion of contemporary historical developments as unnecessary, Bidlisi's critics seemed to endorse this more narrowly conceived framework for dynastic history.

A similar set of underlying issues was attached to the third criticism of Bidlisi's work. Bidlisi consciously composed his history within the tradition of Perso-Islamic history writing. While *The Eight Paradises* was not the first Ottoman history in Persian, it was the first to embrace fully the hyper-literate prose style of the latest Timurid historiographical works. Ottoman histories in Turkish, with few exceptions, exhibited a clear style, which presented the actions of the Ottoman sultans in simple and largely unadorned terms.¹⁵⁰ Although Bidlisi rejected such an approach as unworthy of the subject, the clear and simple style apparently appealed among certain segments of the Ottoman ruling class.

Such critical segments also help explain the mixed reception of Bidlisi and other Persian émigré litterateurs from this period. On one hand, the varying and conflicting patronage priorities of successive sultans, such as Bayezid II and Selim, may help to explain the waxing and waning fortunes of these skilled stylists. After all, Bayezid's alternating decisions to support Bidlisi's Persian history and then Kemalpasazade's Turkish history suggest that the attentions and tastes of sultans could be both eclectic and capricious. On the other hand, the reception of these men and their work within the wider circles of learned and lettered Ottoman society was equally critical both to their professional and interpersonal acceptance within their own lifetimes, as well as to the lasting legacy of their work after their departure or death. Such wider acceptance is, of course, complicated by the broader cultural trajectory of Ottoman letters in the sixteenth century. The emergence of a high register Ottoman Turkish was not an entirely organic process, but rather, part of the concerted efforts of Ottoman men of letters, especially in the reign of Süleyman, to cultivate and monumentalize a

¹⁵⁰ The greatest exception to this tendency may be the historical work of Tursun Beğ, which despite its widespread popularity in modern scholarship, was not widely known in its own day (İnalçık, "Tursun Beğ," 69).

confident and refined Turkish language as the idiom of empire. Such efforts included translations of the classics of Arabic and Persian, as evidenced by the work of Lami'i Çelebi, and new compositions in prose and verse by many others.¹⁵¹ Concomitant with this literary production, Ottoman litterateurs also set about to define and memorialize the trajectory of this new idiom through biographical dictionaries of poets that established explicitly or implicitly a powerful historical narrative for the language from the earliest days of the dynasty. In this manner, Âşık Celebi, who was himself personally connected to a number of Persian émigré poets, nonetheless prefaced his biographical dictionary with a long introduction describing the development of Turkish verse in Ottoman lands during each of the reigns of the sultans.¹⁵² Others, such as Sehi Beğ and Latifi, organized their dictionaries chronologically according to the regnal periods of the Ottoman sultans and thus implicitly bound the fortunes of Turkish verse to the ruling dynasty.¹⁵³ For this reason, Persian emigres were frequently excluded from the historical record, since their literary accomplishments sat outside the parameters of these biographical dictionaries and the larger project they sought to promote. Significantly, Bidlisi, despite his renown in his own day and later periods, has no biographical notice in any of the major dictionaries of poets produced in the sixteenth century. Even the exceptions tend to prove the rule. Consider, for example, the Persian émigré and poet Basiri. Unlike many others, his life and accomplishments feature in a number of these sixteenth-century Ottoman dictionaries. Yet, his inclusion has more to do with his accomplishments in Turkish verse, as Sehi Beğ explains: "As he has been in *Rum* a long time, it is as if he has become a *Rumi* ... He has Turkish poems. So, because he is counted among the poets of *Rum* and has become well known, he is recorded in this dictionary."¹⁵⁴

Such obscuring of the accomplishments of Persian emigres also affected the reception of historical works in the sixteenth century. In the years after Bidlisi's death in 1520, Persian histories continued to be patronized by the Ottoman court. Indeed, the Persian verse histories of the official court historiographers in the latter half of the sixteenth century underscore the continuing, if limited, significance of Persian historical writing in an

¹⁵¹ G. K. Alpay, "Lāmī'ī Çelebi and His Works," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 35, 2 (1976): 73–93.

¹⁵² Âşık Çelebi, *Meşâ'irü'ş-Şu'arâ*, 179–240.

¹⁵³ Sehi Beg, *Heşt Bihişt*; Latifi, *Tezkiretü'ş-Şu'ara*.

¹⁵⁴ Sehi Beg, *Heşt Bihişt*, 280.

Ottoman context. Significantly such patronage was never fully accepted by wider lettered Ottoman society. In the first half of the sixteenth century, during the first decades of Süleyman's reign the picture is certainly more complex. For, while in later decades Kemalpasazade and especially Celalzade would become remembered as the major chroniclers of Süleyman's reign, Süleyman and the court were equally, if not more, committed to the production of at least one Persian prose history of his reign.

The history in question is the entirely forgotten *Kanz al-jawahir al-sanniyya fil-futuhāt al-sulaymaniyya* (*Treasure of the Brilliant Jewels among the Süleymanic Conquests*) of Shah Qasim Tabrizi.¹⁵⁵ In some measure, Shah Qasim was the living heir to Bidlisi's legacy in the reign of Süleyman. Like Bidlisi, Shah Qasim was raised in Tabriz, where his father was a respected and learned scholar with theosophical Sufi interests. His father, as a consequence of his spiritual mastery, attracted the interest of a budding young Ottoman scholar, Halimi Çelebi, who came to study under his guidance in Tabriz. During this period of study, Halimi Çelebi became acquainted with the young Shah Qasim. Years later, when Selim and the Ottoman army arrived in Tabriz after Chaldiran in 1514, Halimi Çelebi, then serving as Selim's tutor, was well placed to introduce Shah Qasim to the Ottoman court. Selim was evidently impressed by Shah Qasim – in this regard, 'Âşik Çelebi relates an anecdote of Shah Qasim's impressive Quranic exegetical erudition before the sultan – and so, he ordered the Persian scholar to accompany other skilled and learned men in their resettlement in Istanbul.¹⁵⁶

Beyond these scholarly abilities in the traditional religious sciences and Sufism, like Bidlisi, Shah Qasim was also a master stylist with a pronounced inclination toward the writings of Raghib Isfahani. In recognition of these skills, Süleyman, at the beginning of his reign ordered Shah Qasim to write a history of the young sultan's first campaigns. Impressed with Shah Qasim's early efforts, Süleyman increased his daily stipend from 50 to 70 *akçes* per day – and again to 100 *akçes* during campaigns in Iraq in the 1530s.¹⁵⁷ In this manner, the composition of this regnal history would become his major preoccupation until his death in 1539 or 1540. Shah Qasim's long period of writing and the form that his history took shared significant overlap with two other major Ottoman historians of the

¹⁵⁵ Shāh Qāsim Tabrizī, *Kanz al-jawāhir al-sanniyya fil-futūhāt al-sulaymāniyya*, SK Ms. Ayasofya 3392.

¹⁵⁶ For details of Shah Qasim's life, see the biographical account produced by 'Âşik Çelebi, his close friend ('Âşik Çelebi, *Meşâ'irü 'ş-Şu'arâ*, 1412–17); Taşköprizade, *Shaqâ'iq*, 355; Mecdi, *Hadâ'iq al-shaqâ'iq*, 454–55.

¹⁵⁷ 'Âşik Çelebi, *Meşâ'irü 'ş-Şu'arâ*, 1415.

sixteenth century. Again, like Bidlisi, his history, in style and approach, drew parallels with the best of Persian historical writing, including the work of Vassaf, Yazdi, and Khunji-Isfahani.¹⁵⁸ Yet, like Celalzade's history entitled *Tabaqatü'l-memalik ve derecatü'l-mesalik* (*Echelons of the Dominions and the Hierarchies of Professional Paths*), Shah Qasim's project unfolded over several decades.¹⁵⁹ Versions of his history recounting particular campaigns circulated before the completion of the entire work. In this sense, both men really acted as chroniclers, in so far as their activity offered an ongoing and chronologically driven narrative of the unfolding developments Süleyman's eventful reign. Yet the ambitions of both Celalzade and Shah Qasim far exceeded a simple recounting of successful campaigns. Both men fully embraced the elevated and hyper-literate parameters for historical writing insisted by Bidlisi. And both works set out to describe, not only military campaigns, but also the hierarchy, organization, and personnel of Süleyman's central administration – in much the same manner as Bidlisi had done for Bayezid – as well as a geographic survey of the wide-ranging provinces of the empire – again in echo of Bidlisi's survey of Mehmed II's domains.¹⁶⁰ Most importantly perhaps – and an aspect of the work to which we will return in the following chapter – both works fully embraced and deployed the spectrum of the Timurid vocabulary of sovereignty.

Given these stylistic, structural, and ideological similarities, we may ask why Shah Qasim's history has been completely forgotten, while the chancellor Celalzade's went on to become the locus classicus of Süleyman's reign. Indeed, the content and style of their works are so similar that Felix Tauer, in his analysis of a portion of Shah Qasim's history in the 1920s, suggested that the work might be the product of the great Ottoman chancellor.¹⁶¹ Part of the explanation may entail the incomplete nature of Shah Qasim's history, a fact remarked upon by Taşköprizade in his entry on the Persian historian. Yet Celalzade's history is also incomplete, insofar as it does not describe the administrative and geographic dimensions of the empire as promised in the introduction. In Süleyman's reign, Shah

¹⁵⁸ 'Âşık Çelebi, *Meşâ'irü'ş-Şu'arâ*, 1415–16.

¹⁵⁹ Şahin, *Empire and Power*, 170.

¹⁶⁰ Shah Qasim outlines the contents of his work. These include four pillars (*rukun*) on the character of the sultan, his viziers and the Imperial Council, the number and structure of the army, and a description of the empire with an account of its systems of revenue and expenditure (Shāh Qāsim, Tabrīzī, *Kanz al-jawābir*, 11b); on Celalzade's plan for *Echelons*, see Şahin, *Empire and Power*, 173.

¹⁶¹ Felix Tauer, *Histoire de la campagne du Sultan Suleyman Ier contre Belgrade en 1521* (Prague: F. Řivnáče, 1924), 17.

Qasim's work was known and circulated in some capacity, both as evidenced by the three extant sixteenth-century manuscripts of the work and by 'Âşık Celebi's inclusion of the work's opening line and several couplets – upon which basis *Treasure of Brilliant Jewels* may be firmly and confidently attributed to Shah Qasim.¹⁶² The difference in reception history of the two works seems to exceed the bounds of historical contingency. Despite all their similarities, the works have one major difference; Shah Qasim's *Treasure* was written in Persian and Celalzade's *Echelons of the Dominions* was composed in Turkish. This difference also underscores the varying trajectories of Turkish and Persian historical writing among the Ottomans in the sixteenth century.

Notwithstanding such divergent trajectories, Ottoman Turkish historical writing certainly accepted the stylistic sensibilities of the Persian chancery style demanded by Bidlisi throughout his career in Ottoman lands. There is perhaps no greater evidence of this contention than the form that Ottoman histories assume after *The Eight Paradises*. Indeed, even at the end of the century, Mustafa 'Âli recognized Bidlisi's history as a watershed in the development of an Ottoman tradition of historical writing. In the preface of the fourth volume of his universal history, 'Âli presents his own narrative of the formation and development of Ottoman historical writing up to his own day. The account presents several distinct phases of historical writing that are punctuated with transitioning lines of verse. In 'Âli's estimation, the first group of historians included men such as 'Âşıkpaşazade, Neşri, and Ruhi, who, while preserving the events of earlier days for the benefit of posterity, were not – as would have been appropriate – true litterateurs. These true litterateurs constituted the second phase of historical writing and included the leading sixteenth-century scholar-bureaucrats with historiographical interests, such as Kemalpaşazade, Celalzade, Ramazanzade, and Hoca Sa'deddin. Bidlisi is the first historian mentioned in this group and the clear initiator of this transition. Significantly, in contrast to his immediate forebears, he was a peerless and eloquent historian, who compared favorably with such renowned historians of the broader Islamic tradition as Ibn al-Athir and al-Tabari.¹⁶³

¹⁶² Compare 'Âşık Çelebi, *Meşâ'irü 'ş-Şu'arâ*, 1416; Shāh Qāsim, Tabrīzī, *Kanz al-jawāhir*, Ayasofya 3392, 1b; compare also lines of poetry attributed by 'Âşık Çelebi to Shah Qasim with the poetry in *Kanz al-jawāhir*: 'Âşık Çelebi, *Meşâ'irü 'ş-Şu'arâ*, 1416; Shāh Qāsim, Tabrīzī, *Kanz al-jawāhir*, Ayasofya 3392, 3a/b.

¹⁶³ Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual*, 248; 'Âli, *Muṣṭafā 'Âlī's Künhü'l-aḥbār and Its Preface according to the Leiden Manuscript*, 35.

Not only was Bidlisi's work placed within the Ottoman historical canon, but, as 'Âli implies, throughout the sixteenth century, Ottoman historians sought to emulate his style. The language of this style ultimately became the high register Ottoman Turkish that constituted the imperial idiom of Süleyman's reign – and indeed, all of the historians placed immediately alongside Bidlisi in 'Âli's catalog wrote in Turkish. Yet the attributes of this idiom remained remarkably faithful to the Persian chancery style that Bidlisi had helped to introduce in the first two decades of the sixteenth century and Shah Qasim continued to cultivate well into the reign of Süleyman. Whether scholars or secretaries, Ottoman historians overwhelmingly accepted the literary parameters and conventions of this chancery style and sought to compose works of history in Turkish that conformed to the canon of accustomed historical writing, which Bidlisi championed in his work. Ottoman histories in Turkish increasingly deployed the full range of rhetorical technique through frequent citation of the authoritative sacred, poetic, and historical references found in Persian histories. Not surprisingly, after Bidlisi, *zîkr-i jamîl* appears regularly in the introductions to Ottoman histories, as their authors deployed the concept to justify and explain the aims of their particular projects. In fact, some of the most prominent Ottoman historians of the subsequent generations, including Celalzade Mustafa, his brother Salih Çelebi, Hoca Sa'deddin, and Mustafa 'Âli, all discussed the historical and literary concept in the introductions to their Ottoman histories.¹⁶⁴ While it is likely the case that these authors had Sa'di's *Rose Garden* in mind as much as Bidlisi's *The Eight Paradises*, the widespread acceptance of the concept reflects the near universal embrace of the chancery style in Ottoman historical writing in the sixteenth century.

¹⁶⁴ The varied uses to which these four historians put the concept of a lasting renown could, in its own right, form a separate study. Salih Çelebi, Hoca Sa'deddin and Mustafa 'Âli all discuss *zîkr-i jamîl* in their introductions (Şalih Çelebi, *Ta'rîh-i Sulţân Süleymân*, Universitätsbibliothek Leipzig B. or. 012, 3b); Hoca Sa'deddin, *Tacü't-tevârih*, 1:7; 'Âli, *Künhü'l-ahbâr*, 1:7–8; although Celalzade does not explicitly refer to *zîkr-i jamîl*, his slightly different formulation, a lasting name (*baqa-yi nam*) addresses the same underlying concept, and in fact, is found in the earlier literature (Mustafa Çelebi Celalzade, *Geschichte Sultan Süleymân Kânûnîs von 1520 bis 1557, oder, Tabaqât ül-Memâlik ve Derecât ül-Mesâlik*, ed. Petra Kappert (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1981), 9a).

Ottoman Sovereignty on the Cusp of Universal Empire

KHILAFAT-I RAHMANI AND THE AQQUYUNLU CHANCERY

The Aqquyunlu – and subsequent Ottoman and Mamluk – adaptation of the Timurid vocabulary of sovereignty does not suggest that these sultanates lacked terminological innovation in their own right. In fact, many of the polities of the fifteenth century, and perhaps particularly the Aqquyunlu, were concerned with developing innovative titles to describe their sovereignty.¹ To be sure, such innovations shared the basic presuppositions of the Timurid vocabulary of sovereignty of the early fifteenth century. In most instances, the terminology and its underlying epistemological references rejected, or at least sidestepped, juridical or genealogical definitions of sovereignty, which tended to exclude the legitimating claims of the men who actually wielded political authority in the fifteenth century. As we have seen in Chapter 4, Timurid strategies for legitimation sought to bolster claims to authority through the divine or cosmic favor shown to Timurid princes. These arguments, in contrast to the relatively staid and constricting juridical and genealogical parameters developed by legal scholars and the upholders of Chinggisid tradition, drew upon a wide array of astrological, mystical, philosophical, and occult doctrines and freely mixed ideas from these varied traditions to create a compelling and universalizing conception of kingship.

In this respect, between the 1470s and 1490s, Aqquyunlu scholars and chancery officials developed and articulated their own descriptive term for this new type of kingship, which they called *khilafat-i rahmani* (the

¹ Woods, *The Aqquyunlu*, 100–6.

vicegerency of God). As with the Timurid vocabulary of sovereignty, *khilafat-i rahmani* was developed through learned treatises of philosophers, astrologers, and Sufis, employed by scholars in encomiastic celebrations of Aqquyunlu royal patrons, and adapted by secretaries in official correspondence with other sovereign rulers. It is in this intellectual and political context that Bidlisi was first exposed to the term. He employed it in the notations made within his personal composition notebook, which he completed a few years before his departure from his homeland.² Over the course of his career among the Ottomans, he made the term his preferred descriptor of the Ottoman sultans and its underlying concept the basis for his discussion of the nature of their rule. Yet Bidlisi's adaptation of a term first developed in the Aqquyunlu context of western Iran does not suggest that his use of the concept remained static. In fact, during his years among the Ottomans, Bidlisi's discussion on the nature and purpose of rule evolved considerably. It must perhaps remain an open question as to whether such an evolution more immediately reflected changes in his thinking or developments in the broader political contexts in which he operated between 1503 and 1520.

One thing that is certain is that *khilafat-i rahmani* became vogue among scholars and secretaries in western Iran during the final decades of the fifteenth century. In 1476, Jalal al-Din Davani associated Uzun Hasan with the term in his dedicatory preface to the *Arznama* (*Epistle of the Military Parade*), a work that described the military and civilian administrative participants of a military review near the ruins of Persepolis.³ As a catalog of the great dignitaries associated with Aqquyunlu rule, the work is essentially encomiastic and, as such, Davani's characterization of Uzun Hasan as ruler suitably establishes his magnificence:

The Majesty of the workshop of vicegerency, the emperor of the protected faith, the Jamshid-resembling king, recipient of the succor of the victory-granting heavens over enmity, the warrior in the path of God, the striver in heightening the word of God, the one sent for the ninth century,⁴ the one qualified by excellent widespread actions, the greatest of kings of the age, the grandest of the Caesars of the period, refuge of the rulers of the time, the vicegerent of God (*khalifat al-rahman*), the master of the age, the Sultan Abu al-Nasr Hasan Beg Bahadur Khan.⁵

² The notebook (*majmu'a*) was completed in August–September 1500 (Bidlīsī, *Majmū'a*, Ms. Ayasofya 3986, 134b). Within one year of this date, the Qizilbash seized Tabriz and Bidlisi's position in his homeland was jeopardized.

³ Davānī, “‘Arznāma”; Minorsky, “A Civil and Military Review in Fārs in 881/1476.”

⁴ A reference to Uzun Hasan's status as the *mujaddid* in the ninth Hijri century.

⁵ Minorsky, “A Civil and Military Review in Fārs in 881/1476,” 148.

The usage of *khilafat-i rahmani* was subsequently adopted by a number of scholars from western and central Iran and used in their own laudatory treatment of patrons. For instance, Bidlisi's father, Husam al-Din 'Ali, uses it in the dedicatory preface to his exegesis of the Quran, *Jami' al-tanzil wa'l-ta'wil* (*The Compendium of Revelation and Interpretation*) in reference to Bayezid II, whom he describes as the obtainer of the vicegerency of God (*al-fa'iz bi'l-khilafa al-rahmaniya*).⁶ Around the same period, an astrologer with possible connections to Muhammad Nurbakhsh also included the title in the conclusion of an astrological and medical treatise that he also dedicated to Sultan Bayezid II.⁷ The scholar in question, Husam ibn Shams al-Din Gilani, was known in Ottoman circles as Hitabi and may have been the son of Muhammad Nurbakhsh's prominent disciple, Shams al-Din Lahiji.⁸ Regardless of Hitabi's later Ottoman career as astrologer (*munajjim*), his origins in Gilan and possible Nurbakhshi connections help locate the term in western Iran during this period.

Use of the title was not limited to laudatory display in scholarly and literary works. *Khilafat-i rahmani* seems to have gained some currency within the Aqqyunlu chancery during the last two decades of the fifteenth century. For instance, an Aqqyunlu secretary employed the term in a letter composed in 1497 on behalf of a group of military commanders who wished to petition the Ottoman sultan Bayezid II. Although the letter employed rather simple and direct prose to communicate the petition – an indication perhaps that it was not the work of Bidlisi or any other high-ranking secretary – it included among the epithets of the Ottoman sultan the declaration of his status as *khalifa-yi rahmani*.⁹ Despite the relatively humble prose of this petition, the upper ranks of the Aqqyunlu chancery corps clearly used the title as well. In fact, the two most famous secretarial luminaries of this chancery, Bidlisi and Fazlallah Khunji-Isfahani, both seemed to have favored the term. Bidlisi used it in his personal composition collection as a shorthand moniker for Ya'qub,¹⁰

⁶ Ibid., 3b.

⁷ Hüsâm bin Shams al-Dîn Gîlânî, *Jâmi' al-qismayn*. SK Ms. Ayasofya 2414-M. I am grateful to Ahmet Tunç Şen for sharing this reference with me.

⁸ For a discussion of Hitabi's background and career as an astrologer in Ottoman lands, see Ahmet Tunç Şen, "Astrology in the Service of Empire: Knowledge, Prognostication, and Politics at the Ottoman Court, 1450s-1550s" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 2016), 217–25; Ahmet Tunç Şen, "Reading the Stars at the Ottoman Court of Bayezid II (r.886/1481–918/1512) and His Celestial Interests," *Arabica* 64 (2017): 577–82.

⁹ Ferîdün Beğ, *Münşe'âtü's-selâtin*, 1:330.

¹⁰ Bidlisi entitles one of Ya'qub's letters: "A Reply from His Majesty the Victorious Vicegerent of God (*javab ki az janib-i hazrat-i khalifat al-rahmani muzaffari*)" (Bidlisi, *Majmû'a*, Ms. Ayasofya 3986, 49b).

while Fazlullah Khunji-Isfahani employed the term in 1514 in association with his new patrons, the Uzbek rulers of Transoxiana. Specifically, Khunji-Isfahani declared Abu'l-Fath Muhammad Shibani Khan the imam of the age and vicegerent of God (*imam al-zaman va khalifat al-rahman*) in the introduction to his juridical work on the definition and duties of a Muslim ruler.¹¹

JURIDICAL, PHILOSOPHICAL, AND THEOSOPHICAL CALIPHATES

Khunji-Isfahani's usage of the term, and indeed his broader intellectual project, stands in considerable contrast to the general tenor of late fifteenth-century discourses on sovereignty. Most significantly, contrary to the discussions of contemporaries, which frequently neglected the rich juridical tradition of defining the caliphate, Khunji-Isfahani fully engaged with Hanafi and Shafi'i legal thinking on leadership in the Muslim community and sought to define a juridically defensible position on the matter that would accommodate the political realities of his day.¹²

In this manner, his thinking sought to engage the seminal works of Muslim jurists in previous centuries on the theory of the caliphate, especially al-Mawardi's (d. 1057) *al-Ahkam al-sultaniya* (*The Ordinances of Government*), al-Ghazali's (d. 1111) *Ihya' 'ulum al-din* (*Restoration of the Sciences of Faith*) and Ibn Jama'a's (d. 1333) *Tahrir al-ahkam* (*Amendment to the Ordinances*).¹³ Juridical thought on the caliphate coalesced in the work of al-Mawardi in the eleventh century at a time when the Abbasid caliphs exercised little de facto authority. Al-Mawardi's great contribution was to conceive of a theory of the caliphate that preserved the de jure authority of the Abbasid caliphs by formally investing sultans with the authority to exercise political power.¹⁴ With the advent of the Mongols in

¹¹ Fażl Allāh ibn Rūzbihān Khunji-İsfahānī, *Sulūk al-Mulūk*, ed. Muḥammad 'Alī Muvahḥid, (Tehran: Shirkat-i Sahāmī-yi Intishārāt-i Khvārazmī, 1362), 50.

¹² *Ibid.*, 49.

¹³ For a detailed discussion of Khunji-Isfahani's work in relation to his predecessors, see Lambton, *State and Government in Medieval Islam*, 180–85.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 80–85; for assessments of al-Mawardi's impact on legal discourses of the caliphate, see H. A. R. Gibb, "Al-Mawardi's Theory of the Khilafah," in *Studies on the Civilization of Islam*, eds. Stanford J. Shaw and William R. Polk (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1962), 151–65; Aziz Al-Azmeh, *Muslim Kingship: Power and the Sacred in Muslim, Christian, and Pagan Politics* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1997), 169–74; Crone, *God's Rule*, 232–33; Ovamir Anjum, *Politics, Law, and Community in Islamic Thought: The Taymiyyan Moment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 117–21.

the thirteenth century, Muslim jurists were faced with a new challenge, as the extinction of the Abbasid caliphate threw into disarray the carefully articulated theory of rule that called for the appointment of leaders from the Quraysh tribe of the Prophet Muhammad.¹⁵ To be sure, the Abbasid caliphate remained an ideological and legitimating component in parts of Islamic lands through its preservation as a pillar of the Mamluk Sultanate.¹⁶ Even so, such preservation marked a distinct shift away from the universalizing pretensions of the Abbasids of Baghdad, as few of the Abbasid caliphs of the Mamluk period were recognized beyond Egypt and Syria.¹⁷ In this new context, as Anne Lambton notes, “the problem for the jurists now was to define the authority of rulers so that Islamic institutions might be maintained regardless of political divisions.”¹⁸ The resulting thinking, especially as articulated by Ibn Jama‘a, may be characterized as the legitimization of brute force.¹⁹ As such, any de facto ruler by virtue of the exercise of political power could rightfully assert the de jure authority that previously had been invested exclusively in the caliph. Citing without specific attribution the saying that “the tyranny of a sultan for forty years is preferable to the flock being unattended for a single day,” Ibn Jama‘a held that the seizure and exercise of power itself invested rulers with authority.²⁰

Khunji-Isfahani largely followed Ibn Jama‘a’s approach to the matter when he took up the same questions in the second decade of the sixteenth century. Like Ibn Jama‘a, Khunji-Isfahani recognized the elective and forceful methods by which an individual could become caliph. In this manner, he followed the earliest juridical thinking on the caliphate by recognizing the theoretical appointment of a ruler by (1) election through the consensus of Muslims, (2) a ruler’s designation of a successor, and (3)

¹⁵ Mona Hassan shows that even some pre-Mongol jurists articulated a nuanced view on the importance of Qurashi lineage (Hassan, *Longing for the Lost Caliphate*, 103–7).

¹⁶ Hassan, *Longing for the Lost Caliphate*, 70–97; Peter Holt, “Some Observations on the ‘Abbāsid Caliphate of Cairo,” *BSOAS* 47, 3 (1984): 501–7; Reuven Amitai-Preiss, “The Fall and Rise of the ‘Abbāsid Caliphate,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 113, 3 (1996): 487–94.

¹⁷ On these exceptions, see Hassan, *Longing for the Lost Caliphate*, 97.

¹⁸ Lambton, *State and Government in Medieval Islam*, 138.

¹⁹ This rationalization of rule remained an important strand of Ottoman juridical formulations into the sixteenth century. See, for example, Lūtfi Pasha’s juridical definition of the caliph (Hamilton A. R. Gibb, “Luṭfī Paşa on the Ottoman Caliphate,” *Oriens* 15 (1962): 287–95); Yılmaz, *Caliphate Redefined*, 161, 163.

²⁰ Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm Ibn Jamā‘ah, *Taḥrīr al-aḥkām fī tadbīr ahl al-Islām*, ed. Fu‘ād ‘Abd al-Mun‘im Aḥmad, al-Ṭab‘ah 3 (Doha: Ri‘āsat al-Maḥākīm al-Shar‘īyah wa-al-Shu‘ūn al-Dīniyah, 1988), 48–49.

election through a council. Like Ibn Jama‘a, he reluctantly recognized a fourth method as legitimate: the forceful seizure of authority as licit. In this case, “his leadership is legitimate (*mun‘aqid*) even in the absence of a pledge of allegiance and regardless of whether or not he is Qurayshi, whether he is an Arab, Persian, or Turk, and whether or not he has all the necessary qualifications for office.”²¹

Regardless of a ruler’s method of accession, any ruler who exercises power may be called Caliph, Imam, Commander of the Faithful, and Vicegerent of the Messenger of God, however he may not be called Vicegerent of God.²² This sober and clearly defined theoretical view of rule contrasts sharply with the image of the sultan that Khunji-Isfahani himself develops in reference to his protector ‘Ubayd Allah Khan in the preface to *Suluk al-muluk*. For in the same work in which he rejects the impulse to title kings as the Vicegerent of God (*khalifat Allah*), he celebrates his patron’s uncle, Abu’l-Fath Muhammad Shibani Khan, in the very same manner.²³ It seems, then, that, even for a single individual, the caliph in jurisprudential terms differed markedly from the caliph in court literature.²⁴ How can we reconcile the difference in attitudes that Khunji-Isfahani expressed with respect to the title *khalifat Allah/khalifat al-Rahman*?

One way to understand this difference is to consider Khunji-Isfahani’s remarks as jurist and courtier as separate activities that engaged with two discrete discourses, the epistemological underpinnings of which equally had developed fundamentally distinct and intellectually rigorous conceptions of humankind’s role in the world. The jurists leveled objections to the term *khalifat Allah* with reference to the early traditions of the Muslim community. Al-Mawardi commented on the matter in *Ordinances of Government* by noting: “the majority of scholars, however, object to this view regarding it as sinful to hold it. Only someone who is absent or mortal, they argue, may be represented by another, but God is neither. When Abu Bakr the Upright heard himself addressed as ‘O caliph of God,’ he responded, ‘I am not the caliph of God but caliph of the

²¹ Khunji-Isfahānī, *Suluk al-Mulūk*, 82.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid., 50.

²⁴ For reference to a similar dichotomy in the work of al-Mawardi, see Anjum, *Politics, Law, and Community in Islamic Thought*, 254.

Messenger of God.”²⁵ In the centuries between the completion of al-Mawardi’s work and Khunji-Isfahani’s similar effort, most jurists writing on the subject – including Ibn Jama‘a and Ibn Khaldun – agreed with al-Mawardi’s earlier conclusions.²⁶ However, in parallel with these legal developments, alternative epistemological doctrines developed that not only condoned use of the term vicegerent of God, but indeed, declared its fundamental significance through the assertion that it represented the highest ideal toward which humankind could strive, and the station from which man could properly order the affairs of the world.

One of these alternative epistemological doctrines was rooted in a philosophical discourse that first originated in scholars’ efforts to define the philosopher-king of the ideal political order. Fakhr al-Din Razi (d. 1209), the prominent jurist and theologian of the turn of the thirteenth century, clearly and succinctly described this approach and its relationship to the vicegerency of God in the section on politics of his work on the classification of the sciences entitled *Jamī‘ al-‘ulūm* (*Compendium of the Sciences*).²⁷ Razi’s discussion of politics drew largely from the tradition of political philosophy as it had developed within Islamic lands, especially through the work of al-Farabi and Ibn Sina. As such, like al-Farabi, he emphasizes the necessity of human association as a consequence of man’s nature as a social or political being. This association is indeed necessary, since man on his own cannot provide for all of his basic needs.²⁸ Through association, humans cooperate and a basic division of labor arises. However, the association of humans also results in acts of oppression against one another, in consequence of which an administrator becomes necessary to restrain men from such iniquitous acts. This administrator, through ordering the affairs of the world, is synonymous with the vicegerent of God (*khalifa-yi Khuda*).²⁹ Politics, which is the practice of administering the affairs of humankind, is of three kinds: external or visible (*zahir*), internal or invisible (*batin*), or a mix of the two sorts.³⁰ While kings see to

²⁵ Translation of Wafaa Wahba, ‘Alī ibn Muḥammad Māwardī, *The Ordinances of Government: A Translation of Al-Aḥkām Al-Sultāniyya W’ Al-Wilāyāt Al-Dūniyya*, trans. Wafaa H. Wahba (Reading: Garnet Publishing, 1996), 16.

²⁶ Ibn Jamā‘ah, *Taḥrīr al-aḥkām fī tadbīr ahl al-Islām*, 59; Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah*, 1:389.

²⁷ Fakhr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn ‘Umar Rāzī, *Jāmī‘ al-‘ulūm, ya, Ḥadāyiq al-anwār fī ḥaqāyiq al-asār: ma‘rūf biḥ Kitāb-i Sittīnī*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥusayn Tasbīḥī (Tehran: Kitābkānah-i Asadī, 1346), 204–9; Lambton, *State and Government in Medieval Islam*, 130–37.

²⁸ Rāzī, *Jāmī‘ al-‘ulūm*, 204.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid., 205.

the external/visible mode of politics and learned scholars see to the internal/invisible mode, prophets combine these two modes into a comprehensive and universal whole. He who is perfect in knowledge (*'ilm*) and kingship (*padishahi*) is the absolute administrator (*sayis-i mutlaq*) and worthy of the vicegerency of the Lawgiver (*khilafat-i sahib-i shari'at*). This distinction between the external and internal aspects of politics and rulership would also become a prominent feature of the caliphate among theosophical Sufis, and, in the fifteenth century, emerged as the most widely promoted conception of universal sovereignty among historians, secretaries, and statesmen, for whom their patrons frequently represented the embodiment of this perfect knowledge/rule in the manner of prophets.

For Razi and subsequent philosophers alike, such perfect knowledge was expressed in an individual's possession of the four qualities of equipoise (the cardinal virtues) explored thoroughly in works on ethics (*akhlaq*). These qualities – courage (*shaja'a*), restraint (*'iffa*), wisdom (*hikma*), and justice (*'adala*) – were synonymous with the four virtues originally defined by Plato and reaffirmed in the intervening centuries by both Christian and Muslim thinkers. Possession of perfect courage, restraint, and wisdom – defined as the mean between two undesirable extremes of an individual's character – produced perfect justice, both the last and most important of the virtues, as well as the overarching aim of an ethical disposition. Although prominent Muslim thinkers, such as Miskawayh, described the relationship of these four qualities to human happiness in works on ethics from at least the Abbasid period, Nasir al-Din Tusi's *Akhlaq-i Nasiri* (*Nasirean Ethics*) was the most important point of reference for scholars thinking about ethics and politics from a philosophical standpoint between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries.³¹ In contrast to previous works, Tusi's work not only offered a thorough discussion of individual ethics (*tahzib-i akhlaq*), but also set such discussion in relation to the other practical sciences, namely economics (*tadbir-i manazil*) and politics (*dar siyasat-i mudun*).³² In this way, he made explicit

³¹ Miskawayh calls the four qualities of equipoise *al-fada'il al-ra'isiyya al-arba'* (the four principal virtues) and specifies them as wisdom (*al-hikma*), restraint (*al-'iffa*), munificence (*al-sakha'*), and courage (*al-shaja'a*). Together they combine to produce justice (*al-'adala*). Later discussions of the four qualities of equipoise exclude munificence and replace it with justice. In these schemes munificence is generally understood to be a subsidiary characteristic of justice (Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad Ibn Miskawayh, *Tahdhīb al-akhlāq*, ed. Qusṭanṭīn Zurayq (Beirut: al-Jāmi'ah al-Amīrkīyah fī Bayrūt, 1966), 16–24).

³² Tusi writes in his introduction that, rather than simply translate Ibn Miskawayh's work on ethics, his composition will expand upon the Abbasid philosopher's earlier work by

the relationship between an individual's ethics – rooted in the cultivation of equipoise, which Tusi calls the types of virtues (*ajnas-i faza'il*)³³ – and the proper ordering of a political community.

Although Bidlisi was fully conversant with Tusi's work – indeed, in one of his notebooks he includes *Nasirean Ethics* in a list of volumes that he personally possessed³⁴ – he likely drew his thinking on politics more immediately from the work of his own teacher, Jalal al-Din Davani. Although Davani's work on ethics frequently has been assessed as derivative of Tusi's work, there are at least two important aspects of his thought that diverge from Tusi's work. One of these divergences is the degree to which Davani's thought appears motivated by efforts to define the ideal ruler, whom he calls the vicegerent of God (rendered variously in his works as *khalifat al-rahman*, *khalifa-yi ilahi*, *khalifa-yi insani*). A second major divergence concerns the degree to which theosophical Sufi discussions on the nature of man's role in the cosmos had entered into philosophically oriented discourses by the time of Davani's writing in the late fifteenth century. In contrast to Tusi, Davani incorporates elements of the theosophical cosmology into his discussion. Significantly, Bidlisi embraced both of these aspects of Davani's work and further elaborated them in his own political thinking.

The first aspect of Davani's ethical work that is reflected in Bidlisi's thought concerns the degree to which his discussions of ethics and justice focus on the ideal ruler. Although *Akhlāq-i Jalali* (*Jalalian Ethics*) deals with ethics, economics, and politics in abstract terms, the encomiastic dedication to Uzun Hasan and the introductory remarks on the divine vicegerency lend it a kind of political immediacy absent in Tusi's work. Indeed, John Woods has examined the work not simply as an ethical treatise, but rather as a political pamphlet, the purpose of which was equally to define the attributes of an ideal sovereign and to associate them with Uzun Hasan.³⁵ Davani is rather explicit in this regard, for in defining the ideal sovereign, he references the various Greek and Islamic titles by which such a king is known – as the absolute king, imam, administrator of

incorporating the other branches of practical philosophy into the discussion (Naṣīr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad Ṭūsī, *Akhlāq-i Nāṣirī*, ed. Muḥtabā Mīnuvī and 'Alī Rizā Ḥaydarī, Chāp-i 2 (Tih-rān: Shirkat-i Sihāmī-i Intishārāt-i Khvārazmī, 1360), 25–26).

³³ Naṣīr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad Ṭūsī, *Akhlāq-i Nāṣirī*, eds. Muḥtabā Mīnuvī and 'Alī Rizā Ḥaydarī, Chāp-i 2 (Tih-rān: Shirkat-i Sihāmī-i Intishārāt-i Khvārazmī, 1360), 83–84.

³⁴ Bidlīsī, *Majmū'a*, Ms. Ayasofya 3986, 1a.

³⁵ Woods, *The Aqquyunlu*, 103–5, 233–34.

the world, and civic man – and observes that in his own time, “the regulation of the welfare of mankind has been placed in the mighty grip of the victorious emperor [Uzun Hasan].”³⁶ This ideal sovereign oversees the administration of the sacred tradition (*shari‘a*) and is synonymous with “the Shadow of God, the Vicegerent of God, and the Deputy of the Prophet.”³⁷

The second major divergence, namely the engagement with the theosophical Sufi discourse, is readily apparent in all of Davānī’s thinking on ethics and justice. Although his major work in this regard is *Jalalian Ethics*, which he dedicated to Uzun Hasan, he subsequently wrote several shorter works on justice dedicated to Ya‘qub and the ruler of Gujarat, Sultan Mahmud.³⁸ Across these works, Davānī freely mixes the philosophical terms and concepts employed by Tusi with a theosophical sensibility. So, whereas Tusi regarded the purpose of man as happiness (*sa‘adat*),³⁹ Davānī concludes: “the purpose of man, who is the summation and most noble of created things and the choice part of the world, is the vicegerency of God”⁴⁰ This declaration, as in the theosophical cosmology, places humankind at the center of God’s creation and makes clear his potentiality to act as caretaker of the universe. Despite Davānī’s divergence from Tusi’s understanding of man’s purpose, the path by which humankind attains its end remains the same for the two thinkers. This point is perhaps made even clearer in Davānī’s *Risala-yi tahqiq-i ‘adalat* (*Epistle on Verifying Justice*):

The reasoning human soul is from the base of the spiritual, incorporeal world and is bound to the body. For this reason, its perfection is arrested. Since, in accordance with the Quranic injunction: “We did not create the heavens and the earth and that between them in play” (44:38), every existent thing was created for a purpose and a good. So, the humanly soul was created for wisdom. Wisdom, in accordance with the Quranic revelation: “And I did not create the jinn and mankind except to

³⁶ Here, I quote the translation of John Woods, *ibid.*, 105; Muḥammad ibn As‘ad Davānī, *Akhlāq-i Jalālī* (Lucknow: Maṭba‘-i Munshī Naval Kishūr, 1283), 222.

³⁷ Davānī, *Akhlāq-i Jalālī*, 223.

³⁸ Two of these works have been published: Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Davānī, “Taḥqīq-i ‘adālat,” ed. Najīb Māyil Haravī, *Mishkāt* 18–19 (1368[1989–90]): 35–47; Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad As‘ad Davānī and Najīb Māyil Haravī, “Risāla-yi ‘adālat,” *Majmū‘a-yi rasā’il-i khaṭṭ-i farsī* 1 (1368[1989–90]): 60–72; for a discussion on the production history and relationship of these epistles to one another, see Harun Anay, “Celaledin Devvani, Hayati, Eserleri, Ahlak ve Siyaset Düşüncesi” (Ph.D. diss., İstanbul Üniversitesi, 1994), 178–79; Reza. Pourjavady, *Philosophy in Early Safavid Iran Najm Al-Dīn Maḥmūd Al-Nayrizī and His Writings* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 12.

³⁹ Tūsī, *Akhlāq-i Nāṣirī*, 85.

⁴⁰ Davānī, *Akhlāq-i Jalālī*, 57.

Worship Me,” (51:56) is realized through the perfection of divine servitude, which is an expression of completely expending a force in resembling the divine attributes to the extent possible, such that an individual for this reason becomes the servant of God, or rather, the vicegerent of God. In consequence of this, it is incumbent upon man to strive to perfect his soul through the acquisition of virtues and the rejection of vices.⁴¹

The passage succinctly presents the relationship of man’s soul to the cosmic hierarchy and grounds the discussion of man’s purpose in theological, theosophical, and philosophical discourses. The most fundamental purpose of man is derived directly from the Quranic revelation that humankind was created for the worship of God. Davani defines the attainment of perfect worship, and by extension the vicegerency of God, in theosophical terms with reference to humankind’s potentiality to embody the divine attributes. Yet, ultimately, he agrees with Tusi and the other philosophers that the acquisition of the vicegerency of God comes about through the cultivation of virtues, which are synonymous with the four qualities of equipoise.

Over the entire period in which philosophers such as Razi, Tusi, and Davani were developing a philosophically grounded theory of the caliphate, theosophical Sufis developed a parallel discourse on the vicegerency of God focused foremost on how to cultivate the interior life of the believer. The greatest of these Sufis, that is to say, the one whose ideas had the greatest bearing on the mystical and philosophical trajectories of Islamic thought was Ibn al-‘Arabi (d. 1240). For Ibn al-‘Arabi, his followers, and his latter-day students the vicegerent of God – also formulated as the Complete Human (*al-insan al-kamil*) or the Spiritual Axis (*qutb*) – was at the center of a comprehensive cosmological theory that described the nature of God and the cosmos, and man’s place within the universe.⁴² The theosophical Sufis explored these phenomena through the science of God’s unity (*‘ilm al-tawhid*), which elucidated equally theological and cosmological questions.⁴³

⁴¹ Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Davānī, “Taḥqīq-i ‘adālat,” ed. Najīb Māyil Haravī, *Mishkāṭ* 18–19 (1368[1989–90]): 41.

⁴² For a succinct discussion of the cosmological significance of the Complete Man, see Valerie Hoffman, “Annihilation in the Messenger of God: The Development of a Sufi Practice,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 31 (1999): 352–52.

⁴³ The discussion that follows draws principally from William C. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn Al-‘Arabi’s Metaphysics of Imagination* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 4–30; and William C. Chittick, *Faith and Practice of Islam: Three Thirteenth Century Sufi Texts* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 28–32.

On a theological level, they asked what is God? Their reply focused on three concepts: God's essence (*dhat*), His attributes (*sifat*), and His acts (*af'al*). God's essence is God in Himself – the aspect of God that is incomparable and inaccessible. God's attributes (*sifat*) are those aspects of God that can be known insofar as He has revealed Himself. These attributes are synonymous with the ninety-nine most beautiful names of God revealed in the Quran. Of these many attributes, Ibn al-'Arabi and his theosophical followers placed special emphasis on the seven attributes of the Divine Essence (life, knowledge, will, ability, speech, hearing, and sight), so called because comprehension of their esoteric meaning constituted a mark of human perfection.⁴⁴ God's acts are that which He produces through His attributes. So, as Creator (*al-Khaliq*), God creates in a single act the universe, and as the Merciful (*al-Rahman*), He produces acts of mercy, and so forth. These acts can be distinguished further between those that are unseen (*ghayb*) or spiritual (*ruhani*) and those that are seen (*shahada*) or corporeal (*jismani*). These acts and the effects that they produce correspond to the world of spirits (*malakut*), in which unseen and/or spiritual acts occur, and the world of bodies (*mulk*), in which seen and/or corporeal acts unfold. Since God displays His attributes through the acts in the universe, the cosmos as a whole is a divine form.

On a cosmological level, the science of God's unity (*'ilm al-tawhid*) is concerned with defining the cosmos, which is to say everything other than God. God's acts and the effects that they produce correspond to the world of spirits (*malakut*), the liminal world (*barzakh*), and the world of bodies (*mulk*). This understanding of the cosmos rests upon several interrelated theorems. The first is that there is a distinction between God and the cosmos, the spiritual and the corporeal, the Real and the unreal, and Light and darkness. This distinction is reproduced within the cosmos itself, where the more spiritual, the more Real, and the more Light – the last two of which are attributes of God – are distinguished from the less real, the corporeal, and the dark in an indefinite hierarchy ranging from the brightest, which is closest to God, to the darkest, which is furthest from Him.

This cosmology places humankind at the center of the cosmos. The reason for man's unique status has to do with the all-comprehensiveness (*jam'iyya*) of human beings, who contain within themselves something of all the cosmos – the seen and unseen, light and darkness, the spiritual

⁴⁴ Michel Chodkiewicz, *An Ocean without Shore Ibn 'Arabi, the Book, and the Law* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), 29, 97–99.

and the corporeal, and everything in between.⁴⁵ Consequently, man the microcosm corresponds to the cosmos the macrocosm. As a correlation to this notion, humans are also the manifestation of the cosmos in its entirety, and as such are the gathering-place of all of the divine attributes, which God has displayed through His single act of creation. Whereas the cosmos merely reflects the divine attributes in an indefinite and passive manner, humankind alone among creation is capable of gathering the properties of these attributes in a single, active, and conscious whole. It is in this sense – as the all-comprehensive, active, and fully conscious created thing – that man is the vicegerent of God in His Creation (*khalifat Allah fi'l-ard*) and, as such, is given charge of the whole universe through his central, all-comprehensive, and active nature.⁴⁶ This understanding of the caliphate, differs markedly from the leadership of the community worked out by Muslim jurists. Although the terminology is the same, the vicegerency of the theosophical Sufis was, at least in its earliest formulations, a statement of humankind's potentiality and is therefore an internalized or spiritual matter, which does not necessarily have any effect on the external and corporeal realm. In other words, those individuals who attain the status of vicegerents of God may be unknown even to those around them.

The internal and nonpolitical nature of this vicegerency is succinctly illustrated in a work occasionally ascribed to Sadr al-Din Qunawi, the most prominent student of Ibn al-'Arabi and greatest disseminator of his ideas and a saint whom Bidlisi revered.⁴⁷ In the work, entitled *Tabsirat al-mubtadi wa tadhkirat al-muntahi* (*Clarification for Beginners and Reminders for the Advanced*), the author, who may have been a student

⁴⁵ In chapter 355 of *al-Futuhat al-makkiyya*, Ibn al-'Arabi writes: "When God created this human configuration and ennobled him as He did through the all-comprehensiveness (*jam'iyya*) which He placed within him, He put within him claims (*da'wa*) in order to perfect the form of his configuration, for making claims is a divine attribute" (Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 195).

⁴⁶ See, for example, chapter 278 of Ibn al-'Arabi's *al-Futuhat al-makkiyya*, where he writes: "No existent thing is named by all the divine names except man, who has been charged (*nadb*) to assume the names as his own traits. That is why he was given the vicegerency (*khalāfa*) and the deputyship (*niyāba*), and the knowledge of all the names. He was the last configuration within the cosmos, bringing together all the realities of the cosmos" (Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 286).

⁴⁷ In his earlier writings on the matter, William Chittick viewed *Clarification for the Beginners* as Qunawi's, Chittick, "The Last Will and Testament of Ibn 'Arabi's Foremost Disciple and Some Notes on Its Author," 43–58; more recently, he questioned this attribution, Chittick, *Faith and Practice of Islam*, xi.

of Qunawī, sets out to describe the mystical path to knowledge of God. The conclusion takes up the vicegerency of God by calling its reader to the great task for which he was created: “Know . . . the mystery of God’s trust and the light of the vicegerency of God have been deposited in your sacred inward self.”⁴⁸ Although the author is explicit that the realization of vicegerency is an inward matter of the soul, his explication of how vicegerency is attained further emphasizes the point:

Your vicegerency and governing control appear first in your own specific domain, which is called “the mortal form” or the “human frame.” First, you must fulfill the obligation of this vicegerency and maintain the law of equipoise within your own faculties. But you will not be able to maintain the law of equipoise/moderation (*‘adl*) unless you achieve a character rooted in justice. A character rooted in justice (*‘adalat*) combines restraint (*‘iffat*), courage (*shaja’a*), and wisdom (*hikmat*), which are the middle points of the principle character traits (*awsat-i usul-i akhlaq*). Then, in keeping with God’s promise, you will be worthy of the general vicegerency in all domains.⁴⁹

The passage also underscores the relation between the theosophical approach to vicegerency and philosophical approaches to ethics. Indeed, the four habits constitutive of equipoise are a common feature of Sufi literature on vicegerency and philosophical discussions of the ideal king.

At the time of his earliest exposure to Sufism as a teenager, Bidlisi was introduced to this theosophical approach to understanding man’s place within the cosmos. In fact, Mahmud Shabistari’s *Mystic Rose Garden*, the first Sufi text that Bidlisi read under his father’s supervision, references and elucidates the basic contours of the theosophical doctrine of vicegerency. In particular, the text echoes Qunawī’s emphasis on justice as a prerequisite of vicegerency and reproduces the same formulation with a slight variation:

The basis of a good character is justice,
and thereafter wisdom, restraint, courage.

The sage, perfect of speech and deed,
Is the one described of these four.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Ṣadr al-Dīn Qunawī, “Tabsirat al-mubtadī wa tadhkirat al-muntahī,” ed. Najafqulī Ḥabībī, *Ma’ārif* 1 (1364[1985]): 114; I have modified slightly William Chittick’s translation, Chittick, *Faith and Practice of Islam*, 104; on the misattribution of this work to Qunawī, see Todd, *The Sufi Doctrine of Man*, 28.

⁴⁹ al-Qunawī, “Tabsirat al-mubtadī wa tadhkirat al-muntahī,” 114–15; Chittick, *Faith and Practice of Islam*, 104.

⁵⁰ Maḥmūd ibn ‘Abd al-Karīm Shabistari, *The Gulshan rāz* (Calcutta: Wyman & Co, 1876), 35–36.

More significantly, Husam al-Din 'Ali offered further guidance to his son, Bidlisi, in these matters through an original work that he composed on the spiritual stations of the Sufi entitled *al-Kanz al-khafi fi bayan maqamat al-sufi* (*The Hidden Treasure in the Explanation of the Sufi's Stations*).⁵¹ The work, which Bidlisi copied at the age of nineteen in 1476, concludes with a discussion of the cosmic hierarchy from the microcosm (*al-insan al-saghir*) to the macrocosm (*al-insan al-kabir*), the apparent to the concealed, darkness to light, and the world to the hereafter. The vicegerent of God is the one who accesses the full cosmic spectrum and holds sway in both apparent and concealed realms.⁵² He who knows the vicegerent of God "becomes the deputy of the vicegerent of God among his people like the prophet to his community."⁵³ For, as confirmed in the Quran, knowledge of the vicegerent of God and allegiance to him is the most appropriate manner to order the affairs of a political community.⁵⁴ 'Ali Bidlisi's discussion of the vicegerency of God bears considerable parallels with the theosophical framework articulated by Ibn al-'Arabi. Significantly, his thinking on this matter – although largely left in embryonic form – pushes the theosophical cosmology to the cusp of temporal and political significance, for it insists upon the role of the vicegerent of God in the external and temporal affairs of man.

THE DUAL CALIPHATE IN FIFTEENTH-CENTURY POLITICAL THOUGHT

These two aspects of vicegerency – an inner state cultivated through justice and an axial component of a comprehensive cosmology with political implications – became significant aspects of Bidlisi's political thought as he defined and articulated the attributes of vicegerency in historical works and political treatises prepared for Ottoman sultans. More generally, in both theosophical and philosophical handlings of the caliphate, thinkers acknowledged dual aspects of the phenomenon. As we have seen, for Razi, such a duality was manifest in the external and internal components of

⁵¹ Ḥusām al-Dīn 'Alī Bidlīsī, *al-Kanz al-khafi fi bayān maqāmāt al-ṣūfi*, Ankara, Milli Kütüphane, Ms. Nevşehir ÜR 201/3, 52a–82a.

⁵² Ibid., 81b.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Husam al-Din 'Ali cites Quran, 48:10: "Indeed, those who pledge allegiance to you [Muhammad] are actually pledging allegiance to God. The hand of God is over their hands."

politics, while Bidlisi's own father suggested the fundamental role of the theosophically defined vicegerent in the expression of temporal authority.

Indeed, Husam al-Din 'Ali's thinking on this dual aspect of vicegerency drew most immediately from the well-developed theosophical approach to the caliphate that emphasized two aspects to the phenomenon. Ibn al-'Arabi, for his part, acknowledged two categories for *imams*, namely, the just, who respect and implement the *shari'a* and the unjust (*ja'ir*), who neglected or actively opposed their obligations as temporal caretakers of God's community.⁵⁵ Separately, or perhaps overlapping with this dichotomy, Ibn al-'Arabi also drew distinctions between exoteric and esoteric expressions of the caliphate. In *al-Futuhāt al-makkiya* (*Meccan Revelations*), he clarifies this distinction by equating the inner/esoteric caliphate with the function of the Spiritual Axis (*qutb*), by which term Sufis referred to God's appointee who, through spiritual perfection, constituted the central axis around which the microcosm and macrocosm revolved. For Ibn al-'Arabi, the *qutb* is the real head of God's community in his age (*sayyid al-jama'a fi zamanihī*). Such esoteric leadership could and, on occasion, did overlap with the expression of formal sovereignty, as was the case with prophet-kings, such as David and Solomon, and in the vicegerencies of the four rightly guided caliphs and several other historical rulers.⁵⁶ Yet, more frequently, the substantive and formal expressions of rule were divorced, during which times, the substantive caliphate had no formally manifest authority.⁵⁷

More immediately, 'Ali's predisposition to construe the vicergency of God in political terms makes sense in light of his Nurbakhshi affiliation. In fact, 'Ali's spiritual "great-grandfather," Mir Sayyid 'Ali Hamadani (d. 1385),⁵⁸ was a persuasive proponent of the potential union of spiritual and temporal authorities, the possibility of which he examined and elucidated in perhaps his most famous work, *Zakhirat al-muluk* (*The Treasure of Kings*).⁵⁹ The work sets out to elaborate the requisite principles of

⁵⁵ Michel Chodkiewicz, "The Esoteric Foundations of Political Legitimacy in Ibn 'Arabi," *Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi: A Commemorative Volume*, ed. Stephen Hirtenstein and Michael Tiernan (Shaftesbury: Element, 1993) 193.

⁵⁶ On the significance of prophet-kings within Sufi political thought, see Yılmaz, *Caliphate Redefined*, 191.

⁵⁷ Chodkiewicz, "The Esoteric Foundations of Political Legitimacy in Ibn 'Arabi," 194.

⁵⁸ For the spiritual chain of 'Ali Bidlisi, see the chain of mystical authority of his teacher, Muhammad Nurbakhsh (Shahzad Bashir, *Messianic Hopes and Mystical Visions*, 46).

⁵⁹ For a discussion of the impact of Hamadani's work in Mughal domains, see Alam, *The Languages of Political Islam: India 1200–1800*, 43–46; in the Ottoman context, see Yılmaz, *Caliphate Redefined*, 57–59, 89–90, 214.

formal and substantive rule (*lavazim-i qawa'id-i saltanat-i suri va ma'navi*) for those Muslim rulers who endeavored to set right the affairs of believers (*istislah-i umur-i din*). As with the thought of Ibn al-'Arabi, Hamadani defined a distinct division between exoteric/formal authority, which he calls *saltanat-i suri* and esoteric/substantive authority, which he refers to interchangeably as *saltanat-i ma'navi* or *khilafat-i insani*.⁶⁰ Within such a framework, Hamadani, like Ibn al-'Arabi before him, acknowledged the rule of those who transgressed the boundaries of the *shari'a*, but labeled such a ruler the Caliph of Satan (*khalifat al-shaytan*).⁶¹ Yet, Hamadani's conception of esoteric authority, as evidenced by his usage of the term *khilafat-i insani*, clearly reflected the theosophical Sufi concept of the vicegerency of God. Significantly, Hamadani and his views were central to the teachings of 'Ali's own master, Muhammad Nurbakhsh.⁶² Bidlisi shared in this spiritual lineage with Hamadani and may well have adapted his usage of *khilafat-i rahmani* (also rendered at times as *khilafat-i insani*) from reading Hamadani's *Treasure of Kings* under his father's guidance.

By the time Bidlisi came of age as a young Sufi adept under his father's guidance, the dual caliphate of the theosophical Sufis had already been adopted and adapted within the political discourse of Timurid courts in Iran. Evrim Binbaş first noticed and examined this adaptation – and, indeed first termed the dual caliphate – as a discernible aspect of political thought in the two decades following the death of Timur.⁶³ In this manner, the dual caliphate, like titles and concepts such as *mujaddid* and *sahib-qiran* entered the new Timurid vocabulary of sovereignty. Also, like these other new powerful titles, the dual caliphate entered Timurid political discourse in parallel with the rivalry for supremacy that played out between Iskandar and his uncle Shahrūkh and remained a discernible feature of Shahrūkh's reign as he contended with the threats to his rule posed by messianic Sufis, such as Muhammad Nurbakhsh, who proclaimed or suggested their status as the substantive caliph.⁶⁴ As discussed in Chapter 4, Iskandar, in the preface to a work on mathematical astronomy, claimed the mantle of the formal and substantive caliphate (*khil'at-i*

⁶⁰ Hamadani uses these two terms interchangeably. See, for instance, his title for the sixth chapter of the work ('Alī ibn Muḥammad Hamadhānī, *Zakhīrat al-mulūk*, ed. Maḥmūd. Anvārī, vol. 11 (Tabriz: Mu'assasah-i Tārīkh va Farhang-i Irān, 1358), 289).

⁶¹ Alam, *The Languages of Political Islam: India 1200–1800*, 43–44.

⁶² On the centrality of Hamadani to Nurbakhsh's teachings, see Bashir, *Messianic Hopes and Mystical Visions*, 136–39.

⁶³ Binbaş, *Timurid Intellectual Networks*, 257–61.

⁶⁴ Binbaş, "The Anatomy of a Regicide Attempt," 391–428.

khilafat-i suri va ma'navi) on the basis of his perfect mastery of the divine attributes that he had attained through the science of letters (*'ilm-i huruf*). As in theosophical formulations of the caliphate, Mirza Iskandar's elucidation of this dual caliphate stressed humankind's potential to comprehend and reflect all of the secrets of corporeal and spiritual dominion, yet for this Timurid prince the realization of this perfect knowledge could be attained, not solely through theosophical contemplation, but through comprehension of the lettrist and astrological cosmologies that equally undergirded God's creation. In a similar manner and with reference to the same epistemological bases, Sharaf al-Din Yazdi, in 1424, described the same dichotomy of rule in the preface to his incomplete historical project, *Fathnama-yi Sahibqirani* (*Conquests of the Sahib-qiran (Timur)*). In this early formulation of Yazdi, Shahrukh possessed the formal caliphate. Only in later versions, perhaps in response to the messianic movements that rocked Herat in the 1420s, did Yazdi more assertively proclaim Shahrukh's possession of both the inwardly and outwardly manifested caliphate.⁶⁵

THE EVOLUTION OF *KHILAFAT-I RAHMANI* IN BIDLISI'S
POLITICAL THOUGHT

Bidlisi's mature thinking on sovereignty reflected his earlier education and the intellectual circles in which he moved as a young man. In this way, he was conversant and, indeed, immersed in the intellectual traditions that had produced philosophical and theosophical conceptions of the caliphate. Specifically, Bidlisi's introduction to Sufism, especially through the teachings of Hamadani and under the instruction of his father, conditioned his particular conception of the cosmic role of God's vicegerent, while his association with Jalal al-Din Davani, the preeminent scholar of western Iran, offered opportunities to consider the philosophical underpinnings of kingship. From his father's Nurbakhshi background Bidlisi absorbed a concern for the celestial ordination of a divinely appointed ruler of spiritual and corporeal domains. Similarly, he accepted Davani's insistence on the ideal ruler's embodiment of philosophically sanctioned attributes and actively incorporated this dimension of kingship in his

⁶⁵ Binbaş, *Timurid Intellectual Networks*, 284–86.

expositions on the greatness of Ottoman sultans. While in a broad sense, these epistemological perspectives – astrological, theosophical, and philosophical – were well established within the Timurid discourse on sovereignty by the time of Bidlisi's birth in 1457, their specific iterations in Bidlisi's mature thinking among the Ottomans demonstrate his efforts to undergird the Timurid vocabulary of sovereignty with robust philosophical and mystical positions and adapt them to an emerging Ottoman ideological idiom.

Like Khunji-Isfahani, who adapted *khalifat al-Rahman* from an Aqqyunlu chancery context to suit his patronage prospects among the Uzbeks in the 1510s, Bidlisi, when he emigrated from Tabriz in 1502, brought the title *khalifa-yi rahmani* along with him and from an early date consistently applied it to his new patrons, the Ottoman sultans. In contrast to Khunji-Isfahani's infrequent use of the term, Bidlisi made the concept of divine vicegerency the principal mode by which he defined kingship and articulated the preeminence of the Ottoman dynasty through the association of the Ottoman sultans with its underlying conceptual attributes. More importantly, Bidlisi's prolific and varied literary production among the Ottomans between 1502 and 1520 offers a unique view to the evolution of a single political concept in the mind of a Muslim intellectual as he wrote across varied political contexts and literary genres over a nearly twenty-year period. Indeed, through a close examination of Bidlisi's writings on the vicegerency of God, we see that his ideas, although largely indebted to the Nurbakhshi Sufi background of his youth and the philosophical thinking of his teacher Davani, evolved and exhibited considerable dynamism in his various expositions.

Bidlisi offered his first substantial commentary on the nature of rule in a work that he presented to Sultan Bayezid in 1503, shortly after his arrival in Ottoman lands. The work, entitled *Mir'at al-jamal* (*Mirror of Grace*), examines the nature of sovereignty through two interrelated epistles.⁶⁶ The first of these epistles occupies the first third of the work and presents the qualities of the ideal ruler through an examination of the four attributes of equipoise and their subsidiary characteristics, while the second epistle places the theosophical cosmology at the center of an allegorical

⁶⁶ One of the extant manuscript copies was produced in Azadlu, a village outside of Istanbul in October–November 1503 (Bidlisi, *Mir'at al-jamal*, SK Ms. Şehid Ali Paşa 2149). For the presentation copy, see Bidlisi, *Mir'at al-jamal*, Ms. Nuruosmaniye 4241. The work was included in the royal library inventory completed in 1503 (Török F59, 71a).

and didactic theosophical tale that contemplates the nature and meaning of the vicegerency of God.⁶⁷

Yet it is in the first epistle that Bidlisi offers the clearer statement on the vicegerency of God. This portion of the work begins by noting that God, made Adam a reflection of divine grace (*mir'at-i jamal*) in accordance with the extra-Quranic revelation (*hadith qudsi*): "God created Adam in His image."⁶⁸ Moreover, God has ensured that man receive the divine light through the successive prophets and saints whom He has sent.⁶⁹ After the Prophet Muhammad, God ensured the continuation of the lights of His message through two groups: first, the descendants of the prophet (*ahl al-bayt*), and second, his companions, especially the four rightly guided caliphs.⁷⁰ Yet, the chain of these leaders continued in succession after these groups through the various leaders and kings who upheld the principles of the faith. The proof of this reality is substantiated in the reign of Bayezid II, who, despite the depravations of Turkmen war bands, has carried on the tradition of raising the banner of the faith in the struggle with the idolaters and unbelievers.⁷¹ More importantly, he is "the absolute verification of [the hadith]: 'the sultan is the Shadow of God,'" insofar as he is a ruler possessed of "the all-comprehensiveness described by the divine traits (*jami'iyat-i ittisaf-i akhlaq-i ilahi*)" and "distinguished in the deputyship of prophethood through exoteric and esoteric kingship (*dar niyabat-i nabavi saltanat-i suri va ma'navi makhsus*)."⁷² In proof of these claims, "The Ancient Almighty Godhead has established and raised the pillars of the throne of vicegerency and the structure of the rank of high honor and the extreme kindness of this exalted king on the four cornerstones of the blessed virtues, which are justice, courage, restraint, and wisdom."⁷³ The remainder of this first epistle presents the four traits of equipoise in greater detail through examination of their subsidiary characteristics.

Through the introduction and first epistle, Bidlisi offers a structure for human history that emphasizes the role of leadership in preserving the integrity of God's plan. In Bidlisi's own day, Bayezid II is the successor to

⁶⁷ On allegorical theosophical tales as vehicles for political thought during this period, see Lingwood, *Politics, Poetry, and Sufism in Medieval Iran*.

⁶⁸ Bidlīsī, *Mir'āt al-jamāl*, Ms. Nuruosmaniye 4241, 3b.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 3b–4a.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 4b.

⁷¹ Ibid., 5a.

⁷² Ibid., 7b–8a.

⁷³ Ibid., 8a.

this tradition, the proof of which is exhibited both in his policies and in his character. Bidlisi's approach in this respect combines historical, theosophical, and ethical discourses to present a compelling image of Bayezid as the contemporary sovereign in a successive chain of just Muslim monarchs. In this portion of the work, Bidlisi associates the dual caliphate with Bayezid and substantiates such association with reference to the theosophical assertion of man's potential to comprehend the divine traits and the philosophical foundations of ideal kingship attained through embodiment of the four traits of equipoise. In several important respects, this portion of *Mirror of Grace* anticipated the broader and more detailed image of Bayezid that Bidlisi developed in *The Eight Paradises*. Indeed, *Mirror of Grace*, completed as Bidlisi was writing *The Eight Paradises*, is perhaps best viewed as an early rendering of the ideas presented in his magnum opus. Moreover, the two sections of *Mirror of Grace* present comprehensive images of the vicegerency of God from alternating philosophical and theosophical perspectives. In his later works, especially *Qanun-i Shahanshahi* (*The Custom of Kingship*) and *The Eight Paradises*, Bidlisi would integrate more thoroughly the concepts and terminology of these two traditions into a single comprehensive theory of rule. Bidlisi called this single comprehensive theory of rule interchangeably *khilafat-i rahmani* or *khilafat-i insani*. On a conceptual level, it is clear that in *Mirror of Grace* Bidlisi is concerned with defining the vicegerency of God, yet he refrains from labeling this vicegerency as *khilafat-i rahmani*. Despite the absence of this title, the image of vicegerency rendered in this work is analogous to his discussions of *khilafat-i rahmani* presented in his later works.

Bidlisi's second substantial commentary on political theory offers the clearest indication that the *khilafat* of *Mirror of Grace* is synonymous with *khilafat-i rahmani*. This second commentary, entitled *Qanun-i shahanshahi* (*The Custom of Kingship*) considers the question of vicegerency through a less didactic and more theoretical approach to the matter. The focus of *The Custom of Kingship* on the technical and theoretical aspects of rule is apparent from the structure and contents of the work. Indeed, the work, consisting of an introduction and four chapters, proceeds in a methodical, cumulative manner from basic arguments about the existence and necessity of rule to more detailed discussions of its various attributes and aspects.⁷⁴ As such, the introduction is divided between two

⁷⁴ The analysis that follows will focus on Bidlisi's discussion of rulership and how it is attained. For discussion of other aspects of the work, see Yılmaz, *Caliphate Redefined*, especially 43–44, 159–67, 171–75, 191–96.

propositions, the theses of which seek to verify the existence of divinely appointed vicegerency and substantiate its necessity as a basic condition of humankind's efforts to order the world.

The two propositions advanced in the introduction establish the existence of the vicegerency of God and its necessity for the ordering of the world. Throughout the introduction, Bidlisi refers to such vicegerency interchangeably as *khilafat-i rahmani* (the vicegerency of God) and *khilafat-i insani* (the vicegerency of Humankind).⁷⁵ In both cases, his conception of vicegerency envisions rule as a consequence of the cosmic structure laid down by God:

Know that because God distinguished and blessed humankind among all elemental bodies through the Quranic revelation: "Certainly we have honored the children of Adam (17:70)" above all the particular created things of the world and honored them foremost among all other created things, so He fashioned humankind as the manifestation of the gathering of His perfect attributes and made him the gathering-place of the encomia of grace and majesty. He molded man's form in two natures, as revealed by the *hadith qudsi*: "I molded the clay of Adam with My hand," from two opposing and contradictory essences. He kindled the light niche of his heart with the lamp of holy light, as is made known by "I breathed into him My [created] soul (15:29, 38:72)." One of its essences is from the realm of angels and the world of spirits and one of its essences is from the world of corporeal bodies. And the essential substance of its soul comes from the heavenly province and the point of origin of happiness, while its corporeal body is gathered from the world of dominion and the seen . . . However, through the gathering of those two essences, man is distinguished and selected among the noble existent things. Through the state of equipoise and perfect singularity, he is honored and occupies the seat of vicegerency, as is made known by "Indeed, I will make upon the earth a Vicegerent."⁷⁶

The passage refers to the terminology and concepts of the theosophical Sufis – especially with reference to man's potentiality to comprehend the divine attributes, and dual spiritual and corporeal nature – and posits humankind's suitability for rule over God's creation. Yet, this suitability is based upon man's potentiality to know the realities of existence from creation to the end, and in view of the fact that he has been created in God's image, as clarified through prophetic tradition.⁷⁷ The human marked by these traits is the vicegerent of God, whom Bidlisi defines

⁷⁵ Compare Bidlisi's description of the work's contents, in which he states that the second proposition of the introduction is on the necessity of *khilafat-i insani*. Later in the text, he labels this same proposition: on the *khilafat-i rahmani*, *ibid.*, 7, 10.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 7–8.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 8.

further as the contented servant (*banda-yi sa'adatmand*).⁷⁸ In so doing, he directly references theosophical discourses on the complete servant of God⁷⁹ and philosophical discourses on happiness as the good of man.⁸⁰ Yet whereas the philosophical discourses are primarily concerned with man's actions in this world, Bidlisi declares that such a contented servant is described by the divine qualities, the perfection of his soul, and the blessed humanly habits "for the reason of ordering this corporeal world and binding this realm of the seen to the spiritual world."⁸¹ Despite this calling for man, he recognizes that not all manifestations of rule successfully unite corporeal and spiritual matters. Those who do are called the rulers of the exoteric (*surat*) and the esoteric (*ma'na*) and count among their ranks prophets and saints who held temporal authority, the rightly guided caliphs, and the twelve imams.⁸²

The second proposition of the introduction is on the necessity of *khilafat-i rahmani* in the world and begins with the assertion that knowledge (*'ilm*) and power (*qudrat*) are indispensable aspects of God's essential attributes. These two attributes of the seven essential attributes of the divine essence were frequently heralded as essential components of a king's qualities, both from a philosophical perspective – as in the work of Davani⁸³ – and in more literary genres, in which comparisons of the pen (*qalam*) and sword (*sayf*) served as complex metaphors for knowledge and ability/power.⁸⁴ In the latter

⁷⁸ Ibid., 9.

⁷⁹ On the connection between servitude to God and the vicegerency, see Chittick, *Faith and Practice of Islam*, 31.

⁸⁰ Tūsī, *Akhlāq-i Nāsirī*, 82–83.

⁸¹ Bidlisi Bidlīsī, *Qānūn-i shāhanshāhī*, ed. 'Abd Allāh Mas'ūdī Ārānī (Tehran: Markaz-i Pazhūhishī-yi Mirās-i Maktūb, 1387), 9.

⁸² Ibid., 9.

⁸³ At one point, Davani defines the *khalifat-i insani* as the one who combines wisdom (*hikmat-i baligha*) and practical ability (*qudrat-i fazila*), Muḥammad ibn As'ad Davānī, *Akhlāq-i Jalālī* (Lucknow: Maṭba'-'i Munshī Naval Kishūr, 1283), 60.

⁸⁴ Since at least the fourteenth century, scholars and secretaries, including Ibn al-Wardī (d. 1348–49) and Ibn Nubata (d. 1366) composed literary epistles on the pen and sword. In the fifteenth century, Davani also composed a similar treatise entitled *Risāla-yi qalamīya*, (Huart, Cl.; Grohmann, A. "Kalam," *El*²). In the contemporaneous Ottoman context, the Turkish poet Firdavsi presented a comparison of the sword and pen to Bayezid II (Firdavsi, *Münāzere-yi seyf ü kalem*, Millet Kütüphanesi Ms. Ali Emiri Edebiyat 576). Kaya Şahin has noted the significance of the sword and pen in bureaucratic circles during the reign of Süleyman through a discussion of Celalzade's *Mevahibü'l-hallak fī meratibü'l-ahlak* (Kaya Şahin, *Empire and Power*, 232–42); for comparisons of the pen and sword in later centuries among Ottoman secretaries, see Ekin Tuşalp Atıyas, "Eloquence in Context: Şabanzade Mehmed Efendi's (d. 1708–1709) Münazara-ı Tığ u Kalem and 'The People of the Pen' in Late Seventeenth-Century Ottoman Empire," *Turcica* 48 (2017):113–55.

respect, Bidlisi's discussion of rule in the introductions to *The Eight Paradises* and *The History of Sultan Selim* assumes the more literary approach by which the pen and sword represent respectively the appropriate knowledge and power of a sultan.⁸⁵

In *The Custom of Kingship*, Bidlisi eschews such a literary turn and instead uses the concepts of knowledge and ability to replicate the philosophers' division of philosophy between theory ('ilm) and practice ('amal). In this sense, the vicegerent of God, insofar as he reflects the divine attributes, should be perfect in both of these respects. Yet, since the time of the prophet Muhammad, who realized outward and inward perfection, there has been and, indeed, will be no need to reestablish the sacred tradition.⁸⁶ The content of this sacred tradition consists of two divine sources of law (*du qanunnama-yi ilahi va du dastur-i hakimana*), which correspond to the revelations of the Quran and the guidance of the prophet through *hadith*.⁸⁷ This sacred tradition consists of two aspects: one theoretical and the other practical; and in this way corresponds to the division of philosophy articulated by Muslim philosophers, such as Tusi and Davani. Whereas these philosophers divided theory into three branches (metaphysics, mathematics, and the natural sciences) and practice into three branches (ethics, economics, and politics), Bidlisi offers an alternative division of theory and practice, whereby each of the two aspects of the sacred tradition are divided once to create four types: theory for servants ('ilm-i khadim), theory for masters ('ilm-i makhdum), practice for servants ('amal-i khadim), and practice for masters ('amal-i makhdum).⁸⁸ The ideal Muslim ruler should be the manifestation of both knowledge ('ilm) and power (*qudrat*), and as such, have the appropriate comprehension of both the theory of the master, which entails an understanding of both the external and internal aspects of faith, and the practice of the master, which connotes an understanding of both ethics and politics.⁸⁹

Even if the vicegerent of God has perfect facility with certain kinds of theory and practice, Bidlisi acknowledges that some aspects of the vicegerency cannot be acquired through simple human agency, but rather

⁸⁵ Bidlisi, *HB*, 5b–7a; Bidlisi, *Salimshahnāma*, 27a–33b.

⁸⁶ Bidlisi, *Qānūn-i shāhanshāhī*, 11.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 11–12.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 12–14.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 15–16; compare with Yılmaz, *Caliphate Redefined*, 44.

they are contingent upon two sorts of gifts God bestows upon human-kind. The first sort is God's generosity (*vahb*), which bestows gifts such as beauty and fortune, while the second sort is human industriousness (*kasb*), and produces material wealth or skill in crafts. *Khilafat-i rahmani* is God's greatest gift of liberality and is marked by a number of signs of God's liberal munificence and fortune.⁹⁰ In this regard, Bidlisi cites six signs: (1) innate faith, (2) divine fortune, (3) innate sense of the blessed traits, (4) prestige of lineage, (5) pleasing appearance, and (6) sagacity and quick-wittedness. Among these signs of God's liberality, Bidlisi places a special emphasis on the importance of the blessed virtues (*makarim-i akhlaq*), consideration of which equals the combined length of the other five signs.⁹¹ The centrality of an ethical disposition for the vicegerent of God is also borne out in the second chapter of the work, which is devoted entirely to enumerating and articulating the ethical characteristics and habits appropriate to the rank of a ruler through a discussion of the four attributes of equipoise, possession of which is a basic condition of the vicegerency of God.⁹² As elsewhere in his oeuvre, Bidlisi's handling of *khilafat-i rahmani* emphasizes two fundamental aspects of ideal rule with important implications for how Ottoman sultans might conceive of and construe their sovereignty. First, Bidlisi insists upon the direct role of God in the appointment of a sovereign through the divine favor shown to him and manifest through clear signs of vicegerency. Second, such signs, although varied, emphasized ethical qualities, the practical application of which would produce justice in matters of governance.

In large measure, *The Custom of Kingship* assumes the form of a mirror for princes, yet it is distinguished from most examples of the genre through its insistence on presenting a sophisticated theory of the ideal ruler by integrating the most salient features of the theosophical and philosophical traditions.⁹³ Bidlisi revisited many of these ideas in *The Eight Paradises*, yet, in contrast with both *The Mirror of Grace* and *The*

⁹⁰ Ibid., 19–20.

⁹¹ Ibid., 23–32.

⁹² Ibid., 35–36.

⁹³ For an overview of the major themes of Islamic mirrors for princes, see Crone, *God's Rule*, 149–64; for a broad overview of the relationship between advice literature and governance during this period, see Linda Darling, *A History of Social Justice and Political Power in the Middle East* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), 103–54.

Custom of Kingship, the parameters of such discussions were much broader and touched upon a wider array of epistemological traditions. Bidlisi's manner of historical writing helps explain the departure of *The Eight Paradises* from the approaches he adopted in *The Mirror of Grace* and *The Custom of Kingship*. After all, as we have seen in Chapter 5, Bidlisi understood historical writing as a malleable discursive tradition, which, at its best, freely and effectively referenced the widest array of learned traditions. In this regard, abstract discussions of rule were appropriate to historical writing. Moreover, such discussions rightly concerned not only theosophical and philosophical concepts, but also theories undergirded by prophetic traditions, astrology, the occult sciences, and the like.

An examination of *The Eight Paradises* for its ideas on rule permits a unique view to Bidlisi's evolution as a political thinker. Despite his insistence on having completed the work in a matter of thirty months, Bidlisi wrote and rewrote different portions of his magnum opus over a ten-year period. In fact, as a consequence of this reworking, two distinct versions of the history exist. The first version, which most significantly excludes any general introduction to the chronicle, was presented to the court in mid-1506. This version includes the eight books of the history, each of which offers praise of the Ottoman sultans through discursive prefaces and a narrative treatment of the reign of each sovereign. Yet, seven years later, upon Bidlisi's return to Ottoman lands after a year in the Hijaz, Bidlisi offered the newly enthroned sultan, Selim, a new version of the history, which included a general introduction for the entire project heavily laden with the cosmic significance of vicegerency. In this respect comparison of these two discursive sections, namely the preface to Book Eight (on Bayezid II) produced in 1506 and the general introduction to *The Eight Paradises* presented in 1513, offers a clear view to the evolution of Bidlisi's thinking between 1506 and 1513. While we may largely reconcile the two images of vicegerency propounded in these discursive sections, the varied emphases between the earlier and later versions highlight the evolution of the concept in Bidlisi's mind and reflect the altered political terrain during these years, as well as the less structured freer form of prose afforded by historical writing.

Both versions of the eighth book of *The Eight Paradises* consist of two prefatory discursive sections, a narrative section, and a final discourse that elucidates the structure of Bayezid's regime with reference to the princes and principal officers of his reign. In the second of the prefatory sections, Bidlisi presents Bayezid as the ideal ruler by associating his patron with the four pillars of equipoise that he previously expounded upon in his other

works.⁹⁴ He precedes this section with a separate preface, which, in contrast, is much broader in scope. In other words, the section references various religious, astrological, mystical, and philosophical authorities to develop a comprehensive image of Ottoman rule – one that is coterminous with an idealized conception of kingship.

As in *The Mirror of Grace*, Bidlisi opens the preface by noting that from the time of Adam to Muhammad, God ensured an unbroken chain of individuals of virtue and righteousness in the form of prophets, saints, and kings. Muhammad delivered the eternal path of right and after him Islam spread. Yet, in the period between the last of the four rightly guided caliphs and the advent of the Ottomans, sovereigns did not gather together knowledge, justice, courage, and obedience. In contrast, the Ottomans have become renowned for “the gathering of the dual creations of the fortune of faith and worldly-rule and the creation of the mixture of outward bliss with the dignities of inward gradations.”⁹⁵ All of the Ottoman sultans passed on these traits from father to son until the time of Sultan Mehmed II.⁹⁶ Upon his death, Bayezid II assumed the reins of leadership in the manner of his forebears, and since his reign corresponds with the turn of the tenth century, his status as *mujaddid* is yet another sign of his divine favor.⁹⁷ Immediately following this claim, Bidlisi offers eight mystery-laden discourses (*latifa*) that demonstrate Bayezid’s superiority over all other rulers.

In general, these arguments entail analysis of the obscure meaning of generally acknowledged proverbs, Quranic verses, or celestial events that substantiate Bidlisi’s central claim. So, for instance, in the first discourse, Bidlisi analyzes the oft-cited *hadith*, “the sultan is the shadow of God on earth (*zill Allah fi’l-ard*),” to demonstrate Bayezid’s perfect grasp of knowledge (*ilm*) and power (*qudrat*).⁹⁸ According to Bidlisi, the purpose of the *hadith* is to demonstrate that rulers should represent God, and all of His attributes. Particularly fundamental in this regard is the sultan’s embodiment of the seven attributes of God’s essence, discussed previously with

⁹⁴ Since this section seeks to identify Bidlisi’s thinking in 1506, citations given here will be to Esad Efendi 2198, Bidlisi’s draft copy from this period. References to the corresponding folios in *HB* will be given parenthetically as well. Bidlīsī, *Hasht bihisht*, Ms. Esad Efendi 2198, 226b–39b (*HB*, 498b–509a).

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 219b (*HB*, 494a).

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 219b–20a (*HB*, 494b).

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 220a (*HB*, 494b–95a).

⁹⁸ On the Shadow of God in earlier periods, see Al-Azmeh, *Muslim Kingship*, 181–84; for among the Ottomans, see Yılmaz, *Caliphate Redefined*, especially 186–88.

reference to Ibn al-‘Arabi. Bidlisi further posits that of these seven attributes, knowledge and power are the most fundamental, and therefore the most essential to rulers. Bayezid is cognizant of this truth and embodies the fully knowledgeable and fully powerful sultan.⁹⁹ Clearly, this analysis draws upon some of the underlying concepts that Bidlisi previously explored in *Mirror of Grace* and *Custom of Kingship*. Indeed, some of the eight discourses represent his earlier ideas even more directly. For example, the fifth discourse, with its emphasis on Bayezid’s possession of the blessed virtues and beautiful attributes known to the masters of theory and practice (*ashab-i ‘ilm va ‘amal*), clearly references Bidlisi’s thinking on *khilafat-i rahmani* in his earlier works, as well as the broader tradition of Muslim philosophers.¹⁰⁰

Yet, the breadth of Bidlisi’s thinking on rule in these eight discourses exceeds the boundaries of theosophical and philosophical arguments advanced in his earlier works. The last three discourses, in particular, draw upon astrological, historical, and esoteric theories to support further his central contention regarding Bayezid’s preeminent status. In astrological terms, he is distinguished by the superiority of his horoscope. Historically, the instance of his rule, corresponding as it does with the end of a Hijri century, marks Bayezid, as it had his forebear Osman, as renewer of the faith (*mujaddid*).¹⁰¹ Numerologically, the last discourse interprets Bayezid’s status as the eighth dynast of the house of ‘Osman. In particular, Bidlisi expounds upon the relationship between man and the structure of the cosmos and asserts that the Ottoman sultans (who are the vicegerents of God) correspond with each of the seven heavens, and as such, Bayezid, as the eighth, is in the rank of the most perfect of human individuals (*dar rutbat-i akmal-i ashkhas-i insani*).¹⁰² The wide-ranging discourses present a formidable battery of heavy rhetorical and intellectual artillery to defend Bidlisi’s multifaceted central contention regarding Bayezid’s status as the ideal ruler.

Seven years later, in 1513, when Bidlisi presented the complete version of *The Eight Paradises* to Bayezid’s son, Selim, he necessarily altered the central message of the new sections of the work. First of all, the accession of Selim required a revised message that would allow for the preservation of Bidlisi’s older theses regarding Bayezid, yet offer suitable praise of his

⁹⁹ Ibid., 220b–21a (HB, 495a/b).

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 223b–24a (HB, 496b–97a).

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 225a/b (HB, 497b).

¹⁰² Ibid., 226a/b (HB, 498b).

new patron, the recently enthroned Selim. Significantly, Selim's accession posed its own unique challenges to Ottoman encomiasts, as the chaotic and fratricidal events that precipitated Selim's rise to power required special rhetorical care. More broadly, the seven years between the two presentations of *The Eight Paradises* witnessed considerable geopolitical transformations that affected the policies of the Ottoman court and precipitated, in turn, an altered ideological outlook. Since the initial presentation of Bidlisi's history, Shah Isma'il had done away with the last Bayandurid princes in western Iran, conquered Herat, and ejected the Uzbek khans from Khurasan. His consolidation of power in Iran was matched by his aggressive policies in Ottoman lands. In particular, the 1511 rebellion of Şahkulu, with its ideological ties to Isma'il, suggested to Ottoman observers that Isma'il had expansionary designs on Karaman and Anatolia. In the light of this altered political terrain, Bidlisi presented a transfigured image of the ideal ruler in the general introduction and conclusion to the new version of *The Eight Paradises* that he offered to Sultan Selim in 1513. This new image drew upon and reformulated the dual caliphate of his intellectual forebears, but was at once darker, more combative, and more eschatological than these earlier visions.

The first sections of the general introduction bear the imprint of this more combative aspect. Here, Bidlisi offers an amended cosmology, which, while still fully reconcilable with the theosophical cosmology he previously espoused, offers a more pronounced oppositional framework for the cosmic order. Consequently, the central cosmic role for humankind, although still acknowledged, is placed within an amended framework, in which God has endowed every created thing with a unique lot, appropriate and satisfactory to His will. In view of this fact, "He designated some radiant essences as the manifestation of goodness and ability and some as the sources of evil and affliction."¹⁰³ Yet, the creation of alternating and oppositional essences in the universe facilitates a near unending conflict: "between the people of the light of gnosis and God's unity and the lords of the darkness of unbelief and apostasy . . . the custom of contention and opposition from the two sides was established."¹⁰⁴ In this world of constant opposition, God designates man His vicegerent in the universe, since Adam is "the most complete in the gathering of the cornerstones of contradiction (*dar jami'iyat-i arkan-i azdad atamm ast*)," which is to say, his dual corporeal and spiritual nature encompasses all of

¹⁰³ Bidlīsī, *HB*, 4b.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

the oppositional essences existent in God's creation.¹⁰⁵ Because of humankind's conflicting nature, God "appointed this occupant of the seat of vicegerency in two sorts and ascribed to it two separate names and modes."¹⁰⁶

These two types of leadership correspond with humankind's potentiality to embrace God's will or reject it. Consequently, members of the first group are the occupants of the throne of majesty and honored by the adage, "the sultan is the shadow of God." They command the good and prohibit the bad and the most perfect of this group of sultans is he "for whom the foresight of his peerless grace and awe is evident in the mirror of his works and effects, and for whom the gathering of the attributes of opposing effects (*jam'iyat-i sıfat-i muqabalat al-ta'sir*) of the Quranic revelations: 'And He gives life and causes death (7:158, 23:80, 40:68),' as well as, He is 'over all things competent, (2:148, 3:165)' are apparent in his insightful administration and luminous opinions."¹⁰⁷ In other words, the most perfect ruler of this preferred type of leadership is the one who has combined in himself all of the attributes of God's creation – antithetical though they may be – and established a just administration by upholding the *shari'a*. In contrast, the second type of rule is implemented through lightless oppression (*zulm-i bi-nurash*) and opposition to the injunctions and prohibitions of God. They are rulers from among the idolaters and enemies of God.¹⁰⁸

The dichotomy suggested by this formulation of rule in *The Eight Paradises* clearly draws upon the cosmological and theosophical frameworks of the dual caliphate. Yet, overlaid with this dichotomy are clear distinctions between good and bad, justice and iniquity that perhaps draw certain intellectual inspiration from Ibn al-'Arabi's consideration of the unjust imam or Hamadani's caliph of Satan. Although Bidlisi's cosmology and typology of rule remain wholly theoretical in this section of *The Eight Paradises*, the opposing images of kingship are suggestive of the impending monumental struggle between the Ottomans and Qizilbash. After all, the rhetoric deployed by Bidlisi in this section points to the near unending struggle between the people of the light of God's gnosis and the lords of the darkness of unbelief and apostasy (*arbab-i kufr va ilhad*). Notwithstanding the Manichean undertones of Bidlisi's cosmology – with its

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 5a.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 5b.

emphasis on the struggle between light and dark – accusations of unbelief and apostasy in reference to the Qizilbash became one of the key condemnations of Ottoman scholars and court functionaries as they sought to legitimize Selim's coming campaign against Isma'il in 1514. Indeed, Bidlisi employed the same formulation when recalling the justification for Ottoman campaigns against the Qizilbash both in a letter that he composed for the Ottoman chancery in 1517, and subsequently in his history of Selim's reign.¹⁰⁹ In the political context in which Bidlisi offered the new version of *The Eight Paradises*, an altered theosophical cosmology was apposite. In such a cosmology man still remained the axial component of God's creation through his potentiality to assume the vicegerency. Yet, the basic narrative of this cosmology replaced the hierarchical unfolding of God's creation with an image of the universe that emphasized constant contradiction and opposition. In such a cosmology, God's vicegerent still played a critical role in upholding God's plan through implementation of the *shari'a*, yet, crucially, such a role also entailed combatting the dark forces of opposition and oppression, which, among Ottoman circles in the 1510s, was equated most obviously with Shah Isma'il and his Qizilbash followers.

The updated version of *The Eight Paradises* bore at least one other key amendment to the image of the ideal ruler initially presented in the earlier version of the work in 1506. This earlier version necessarily presented Bayezid II, the patron of the work, as the ideal ruler. With the accession of Selim, Bidlisi undoubtedly needed to frame an appropriate image of the new sultan in the new version. The resulting portraits of Bayezid and Selim, as reflected in the conclusion to *The Eight Paradises*, contrasted Bayezid's pacific and near saintly character with the martial vigor of his son. Consequently, Bidlisi describes Bayezid "in the image of a king, but rather like Pir-i Bistam / in piety and humility, by nature and name / he suffered hardships in the path of Truth / to obtain Sultan Bayezid (Bistami)'s reward / He abandoned all property and possessions / and entrusted sovereignty and kingship to deputies."¹¹⁰ These qualities, although eminently laudable, were unequal to the task of governance in 1511, when the world was rocked by great discord precipitated by the royal succession struggle and the Şahkulu rebellion. In this context, Selim, who held in his grasp the "two world-illuminating candles" of the *shari'a* and *jihād*,

¹⁰⁹ Feridün Beğ, *Münşe'âtü's-selâtin*, 1:437. Bidlîsî, *Salımshāhnāma*, 73b.

¹¹⁰ Bidlîsî, *HB*, 624b.

exemplified the appropriate man of the age.¹¹¹ To be sure, Selim, like his forebears, possessed the four cornerstones of equipoise (courage, righteousness, wisdom, and justice),¹¹² yet Bidlisi emphasizes his martial reputation engendered by his enthusiasm to embark on the time-honored path of *jihad*, even during his father's reign: "In his father's life, in the custom of his forebears / through his efforts the struggle became customary again."¹¹³ In this world of heightened conflict, the pacific nature of the aging Sultan Bayezid II was ill-suited to the requisites of the age, and Selim, through his character and deeds, showed himself to be the worthiest successor, and as a consequence received God's favor.

KHILAFAT-I RAHMANI AND THE OTTOMAN VOCABULARY OF
SOVEREIGNTY IN A PERIOD OF CONQUEST

Bidlisi's return to the Ottoman court in 1513 and invitation to advise Selim personally afforded the historian a privileged position of influence during several extended periods of Selim's eight-year reign. In this advisory position, Bidlisi on occasion promoted *khilafat-i rahmani* – title and concept – as a key component of Selim's ideology. The development and application of innovative terms to describe Ottoman rule was an important requirement of Selim's reign. The tumultuous events of his rule called for robust legitimating propositions. After all, his aggressive campaigns in Iran, Syria, and Egypt against other Muslim powers potentially undermined the centuries-spanning image of the Ottomans as the preeminent warriors of the faith (*sultan-i ghaziyan*). In this context, the Timurid vocabulary of sovereignty and Bidlisi's formulation of *khilafat-i rahmani* offered an innovative, yet broadly resonating alternative conception that the Ottomans could embrace and pronounce to their newly conquered subjects and neighboring Muslim rulers. More precisely, especially in Bidlisi's most recent conceptual definition of the caliphate, he offered a rationale for conquest that was not only condoned by the requisites of this station, but, indeed, fundamental to its exercise.

Over the course of Selim's eastern campaigns, the Ottomans sought to mold and communicate an appropriate rationale for their conquests. In the buildup to Selim's campaign against Shah Isma'il, the Ottoman court

¹¹¹ Ibid., 624a.

¹¹² Ibid., 624b.

¹¹³ Ibid., 624a.

solicited and obtained the religious sanction of Ottoman scholars, as well as several foreign scholars, for the conflict. Once new lands were conquered, the Ottomans immediately set about communicating a rationale for such conquests to the newly conquered populations. Bidlisi was involved in these activities. For instance, in the first Friday prayer in Tabriz after the Ottoman seizure of the city, Bidlisi spoke to the congregation and explained Selim's titles and their significance.¹¹⁴ While we do not know what specific titles Bidlisi dwelt upon, it is entirely possible that – given his prolonged commitment to *khilafat-i rahmani* – such a disquisition, at least, touched upon this title and concept, as well as its underlying emphasis on the four cornerstones of equipoise, and its outward expression through policies and rule in accordance with the *shari'a*. Certainly, the newly installed Ottoman authorities selected preachers for the Friday sermon in recently conquered cities who would offer ideological support for their views and policies. In Damascus, Ibn al-Farfur, a native of the city, frequently offered supportive sermons for the Ottomans in the weeks and months after their arrival. Similarly, another Damascene penned an encomiastic epistle for Selim, in which he declared the Ottoman sovereign the renewer of the faith and sought to persuade his neighbors of the virtue and justice of an Ottoman administration.¹¹⁵

It is in this context of conquest and legitimation that Bidlisi deployed his preferred title of rule in a public official capacity, and in such a way as to defend Ottoman eastward expansion. In the aftermath of the Ottoman conquest of Egypt in 1517, Selim ordered the secretaries of the royal council and a number of scholars to pen victory proclamations that would be circulated within Ottoman domains and sent to friendly rulers throughout Islamic lands. Bidlisi was asked to write the announcement destined for the ruler of Shirvan. The ensuing missive was a lengthy document that offered the Ottoman ally a detailed account of Selim's campaigns between the conquest of Kemah in 1515 and the sultan's arrival in Egypt in 1517. To explain and justify these conquests, Bidlisi placed the concept and requirements of the vicegerency of God in the forefront of his discourse:

As the highest goal and most lofty aim of possessing the seat of the vicegerency of God (*tamakkun-i masnad-i khilafat-i rahmani*) is limited to strengthening Muslim faith, repulsing the effects of oppression, and raising unbelief and apostasy from nearby lands, consequently, before turning to ordering the affairs of dominion and

¹¹⁴ Bidlisi, *Salīmnama*, 104b.

¹¹⁵ 'Ali ibn Muhammad al-Lakhshmi al-Ishbili, *Durr al-muṣān fī sīrat al-Muẓaffar Salīm Khān*, ed. Hans Ernst (Cairo: 'Isā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1962).

wealth and establishing the banner of security and comfort—as is the established custom of this dynasty of the heavenly vicegerency—in accordance with the religious opinions of the imams and scholars—we (Selim) preferred first to embark on *ghaza* against the apostate Qizilbash, which takes precedence over and is more important than holy war against unbelief, and to obliterate their general iniquity, which secures the most general and complete benefit for the purest part of the lands of Islam.¹¹⁶

Significantly, the passage applies the abstract and theoretical conception of sovereignty that Bidlisi described in various scholarly and literary forms to the practical affairs of governance. In this respect, Bidlisi proposes the basic requirement of the vicegerency of God as the rationale for Selim's campaign against Shah Isma'il. In contrast to his literary discourses, which emphasized the vicegerent's inner qualities, Bidlisi, in this royal rescript, stresses the vicegerent's outwardly manifest obligation to strengthen the Muslim faith and defend it from all threats. He substantiates this position with reference to the various religious opinions that the Ottoman court obtained from scholars on the eve of the Chaldiran campaign.

More than simply a rhetorical instrument of legitimation, Bidlisi's application of *khilafat-i rahmani* in this instance neatly demonstrates the layered and complex connections between sophisticated theosophical and philosophical concepts on the one hand, and their adaptation and application in official chancery products as a component of legitimating discourses on the other. As a title of sovereign authority, *khilafat-i rahmani* made its earliest appearances in encomiastic and chancery material of the Aqquyunlu Sultanate. Yet, in fact, the intellectual underpinnings of the term drew significantly upon older theosophical and philosophical discourses that, under the aegis of Bidlisi and his like-minded contemporaries, were increasingly placed in the service of political ideology. Bidlisi's dual identity as respected scholar and authoritative statesman of considerable rhetorical talent ensured for the term a favorable hearing within Ottoman intellectual, administrative, and political circles in the first two decades of the sixteenth century; its prominent use in a high-profile official document – even at a moment when Bidlisi's professional future was uncertain¹¹⁷ – signals its acceptance within the upper echelons of the Ottoman court.

¹¹⁶ Feridün Beğ, *Münşe'âtü's-selâtin*, 1:438.

¹¹⁷ For discussion of Bidlisi's professional circumstances while writing this letter, see Chapter 3.

Yet, as we have seen in Chapter 2, the complex patronage environment of the Ottoman court in the early sixteenth century suggests that the Ottoman sultans rarely embraced a single unified and completely consistent ideological program. In this respect, scholars, encomiasts, and courtiers each offered their own brand of legitimating ideology and, in this manner, ideas and concepts competed in an arena of discourse. This notion of a malleable and flexible ideological program is also reflected in the official chancery products of this period. In fact, of the seven victory proclamations for the conquest of Egypt included in Feridun Beğ's collection, only Bidlisi's letter mentions *khilafat-i rahmani*. The letters, written in Turkish and Persian and addressed to domestic and foreign audiences, demonstrate a spectrum of rhetorical sophistication. Some of the simpler dispatches to domestic audiences within Ottoman domains or to vassals appear to be variations on a single template, such as letters to Süleyman (1:427), the Crimean khan (1:430), and the general announcement sent to judges throughout Ottoman domains (1:431). Others, including the Turkish letter to the judge of Edirne (1:432) and the Persian letters to the rulers of Mazandaran (1:435) and Gilan (1:436) produce sophisticated arguments to justify Ottoman action against the Mamluks. None of these letters mention *khilafat-i rahmani* deployed in Bidlisi's letter to the ruler of Shirvan, the longest and most elaborate of the victory proclamations (1:438).¹¹⁸ To be sure, the other victory proclamations offered arguments concerning the righteousness of Ottoman actions, yet each scholar or secretary exercised some independence in the precise presentation of these arguments.

The flexibility and range of these arguments are also discernible in the interplay between literary historical works on the one hand and official chancery production on the other. In some measure, Bidlisi's use of *khilafat-i rahmani* in both historiographical and chancery settings demonstrates this point, but the observation is, in fact, applicable beyond Bidlisi. Indeed, after his victory proclamation to the ruler of Shirvan, his rationale for conquest of Muslim lands with reference to the requisites of the caliphate was accepted and redeployed in narrative literary works within one year. In fact, shortly after Selim's return to Istanbul in 1518, Bidlisi's fellow Persian émigré Qazizada completed his own historical narrative of Selim's conquests. By way of introduction to the chapter describing Ottoman efforts to bring Syria under administrative control in the wake of the

¹¹⁸ Feridün Beğ, *Münşe'âtü's-selâṭîn*.

Mamluk defeat at Marj Dabiq, Qazizada prefaces his account with consideration of “the purpose of spreading the principles of the caliphate and world rule.”¹¹⁹ In an echo of Bidlisi’s justification, such consideration focuses on the fundamental necessity of securing the welfare of believers and thwarting injustice. For this reason, in Qazizada’s rendering, Selim and his agents moved quickly and decisively to secure the major cities of Syria from the depredations of the fleeing Mamluk troops. A few years later, the necessity of securing justice within a ruler’s territory was revisited by another court official, the physician Ramazan, who, in his account of the young sultan Süleyman’s conquest of Belgrade, recollected Selim’s conquests and the difficulties of campaigning in Iran in order to suggest that Süleyman’s abstention from renewed hostilities with the Safavids was entirely congruous with the fundamental duties of a caliph within his bounded territories.¹²⁰

Beyond literary works, the proclamation of Selim as vicegerent spread to other areas of bureaucratic production. Perhaps not surprisingly, claims of Selim’s status as caliph – and by extension dispenser of justice, provider of order, and upholder of the *shari’a* – were frequently advanced within the prefaces of provincial law codes (*kanunname*) issued during this sultan’s reign. As with the victory proclamations sent from Egypt, the composition of these law codes – and therefore much of the stylistic sensibility and ideological framework – was left to the prerogatives of the secretaries and statesmen who produced them. In fact, the law codes preserved from Selim’s reign demonstrate significant variety in this regard; prefaces to the law codes were composed in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish. Some include elaborate hyperliterate flourish, while others adhere more closely to a simple presentation of the circumstances that gave rise to their codification. Still others exclude a preface altogether. The preface to the 1518 Law Code of Karaman was composed in a confident and elegant Arabic, but lacked the cutting edge ideological positions of some of the victory proclamations and other law codes of the period. Such an outcome is perhaps unsurprising as this law code was prepared by Kemalpaşazade, who was at that time serving as Military Judge of Anatolia.¹²¹ Certainly, Kemalpaşazade was willing and able to embrace broad and elaborate ideological claims – as he did throughout much of his histories of the

¹¹⁹ Qāzizāda, *Ghazavāt-i Sulṭān Salīm Khān*, 86a.

¹²⁰ Ramazān (Ṭabīb), *al-Risāla al-faṭḥiyya al-Sulaymaniyya*, TSMK Ms. Revan 1279, 9a–10a.

¹²¹ BOA, TTD 63, 1.

Ottoman sultans – yet, he likely judged a soberer and less bombastic line of argument appropriate for the medium of an official legal code. In contrast, the preface of the law code of Semendire, prepared in Arabic in 1516, proclaimed Selim “the vicegerent of God over His creation altogether and without exception, the Shadow of God extending over the world from east to west, over land and sea,” even as the composition lacked the stylistic sophistication of other prefaces.¹²² As with the variety of victory proclamations, the range of stylistic competence and ideological content of these law codes suggests the existence of coexisting, perhaps overlapping, bureaucratic subcultures within Ottoman administration.¹²³

Within such variegated subcultures, the impact of Bidlisi and like-minded Persian émigré secretaries is also discernible. Such impact may have also been felt at a provincial level among the secretaries of Rumelia. For instance, both the law codes of Gelibolu and Niğbolu were composed and organized by provincial administrators and secretaries. Both documents, dating from 1517 to 1518 respectively, offer prefaces in Persian – perhaps suggesting an affinity for the approach of Bidlisi and his colleagues. Both documents separately reference the principal animating concern of Selim’s reign, namely his fundamental status in maintaining God’s order as “spreader of the principles of the pure *shari‘a*” in the formulation of the Niğbolu Law Code and “vanquisher of the heretics and idolaters” – doubtlessly a reference to the Qizilbash – in the wording of the Gelibolu Law Code.¹²⁴ Perhaps yet more importantly, both documents display aspects of the new vocabulary of sovereignty propounded by Bidlisi and his colleagues. In fact, both law codes, despite composition by two different secretaries, deploy a largely overlapping and in places precisely corresponding list of titles for Selim, including his status as “the Shadow of God, the Lord of Conjunction Ruler (*khusraw-i sahib-qiran*), Country Conqueror, World Seizing, Horizon of the Lights of Justice and Beneficence.”¹²⁵

While the embrace of the Timurid vocabulary of sovereignty by provincial secretaries suggests its successful adaptation to an Ottoman context, the precise role of Bidlisi and Persian émigré secretaries in these

¹²² BOA, TTD 1007, 2.

¹²³ My proposal of bureaucratic subcultures in an Ottoman context draws upon Osama Abi-Mershed’s observation of ideological subcultures within the French colonial bureaucracy of Algeria, Osama Abi-Mershed, *Apostles of Modernity: Saint-Simonians and the Civilizing Mission in Algeria* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010), 6.

¹²⁴ For Niğbolu, see BOA, MAD 11, 2; for Gelibolu, see BOA, TTD 67, 2–3.

¹²⁵ BOA, MAD 11, 2; BOA, TTD 67, 2–3.

instances remains ambiguous. Even so, other provincial law codes of Selim's reign more clearly reflect their imprint, especially in the work of Bidlisi's own son Ebu'l-Fazl Mehmed, who, in the years immediately following the Ottoman conquest of Syria, prepared the codes of the provinces of Trablus, Hama, and Hums. In his reflections upon this assignment, Ebu'l-Fazl Mehmed acknowledges a certain debt to the Rumelian provincial secretaries, for he states that it was their long-established tradition of prefacing law codes that suggested to him the suitability of offering prefaces in Arabic for the Law Code of Trablus and Persian for the Law Code of Hama and Hums.¹²⁶ Notwithstanding his reference to the longstanding tradition, he may well have had the authors of the Gelibolu and Niğbolu codes in mind, as he had been serving as the judge of Tırhala in Rumelia precisely at the time when these codes were produced, and immediately preceding his duties in Syria. Even so, Ebu'l-Fazl Mehmed made the medium his own through elaborate, florid prefaces that equally displayed elements of the new vocabulary of sovereignty and seemed to anticipate the prolix preface of Celalzade's 1525 Law Code of Egypt.¹²⁷ To be sure, Ebu'l-Fazl Mehmed couched Ottoman activities in terms of thwarting the iniquity of the previous Mamluk regime and announced the contrasting Ottoman policy of levying the appropriate canonical taxes.¹²⁸ The realization of such a policy was only possible through the careful and measured efforts of secretaries, a requirement in Ebu'l-Fazl Mehmed's estimation that was fully recognized by Selim and, in part, for which he was hailed "the manifestation of the expression: The Sultan is the Shadow of God, the light of the eye of sovereignty and rule, the blossom of the garden of bliss and contentment, the constructor of the edifice of the caliphate and world governance (*mushayyid-i bunyan-i khilafat va jahanbani*), the spreader of the pillars of sultan justice."¹²⁹

The decisions of the Rumelian provincial secretaries and Ebu'l-Fazl Mehmed to produce prefaces and incorporate this new vocabulary of

¹²⁶ Bidlīsī, *Salīmshāhnāma*, 183b–184a.

¹²⁷ For the ideological aspects of the preface to the Law Code of Trablus, see Rifa'at Ali Abou-El-Haj, "Aspects of the Legitimation of Ottoman Rule as Reflected in the Preambles to Two Early *Liva Kanunnameler*," *Turcica* 21–23 (1991): 371–83.

¹²⁸ BOA, TTD 68, 2.

¹²⁹ From the preface to the Persian Law Code of Hama and Hums, Bidlīsī, *Salīmshāhnāma*, 185b.

sovereignty into these documents highlights an important aspect of the spread of the Timurid vocabulary of sovereignty. In Chapter 4, we observed how this vocabulary proliferated through the movement of skilled secretaries and capable historians from one court to another. Bidlisi, in his capacity as itinerant scholar and statesman, is an important link in the chain that connected the interests and preoccupations of the Aqquyunlu Sultanate of the late fifteenth century with an emerging Ottoman legitimating ideology of the early sixteenth century. Yet, the acceptance of these ideas within Ottoman ruling and administrative circles is equally important to explain the emergence of a new universal vocabulary of sovereignty that was, in fact, shared across the Persianate zone of the Islamicate ecumene in the sixteenth century. Here, the quotidian work of provincial secretaries is crucial, for it underscores the acceptance and reinforcement of this outlook in Ottoman lands through its reproduction in the basic products of governance. To be sure, the precise formulae worked out and proposed by Bidlisi were transformed and domesticated through the pens of subsequent Ottoman secretaries, yet their underlying epistemological orientation and ideological outlook helped constitute the building blocks upon which Ottoman functionaries continued to envision and articulate sovereignty.

THE SÜLEYMANIC SYNTHESIS?

The routinization of this vocabulary comprehensively introduced by Bidlisi and his like-minded colleagues continued in the reign of Selim's successor, Süleyman. The ideological concerns of the sultanate varied significantly over the course of Süleyman's long, forty-six-year reign, but many elements of the Timurid vocabulary of sovereignty were fully integrated into the ideological vocabulary of this sultan and helped forge a lasting image of kingship for Ottoman dynasts for the remainder of the century. Yet the precise concerns and trajectories of the sultanate were not uniform across the four and a half decades of Süleyman's reign. In fact, a number of historians in recent decades have pointed to a clearly discernible ideological progression of the reign – from a climate of heightened apocalyptic foreboding that dominated the 1520s and 1530s and was reflected in a distinctly messianic aspect of Süleyman's regnal image that paired well with an aggressive policy of conquest to the soberer and more mature conception of sovereignty that appears pronounced from the late 1540s onward and seems to reflect the sultan's greater emphasis on the

ordering and administration of the empire's vast domains.¹³⁰ Elements of this trajectory are clearly discernible in the literary and visual products of the court during the heyday of eschatological expectation. In this regard, Süleyman's commissioning of a four-tiered tiara, in reference to the imperial and papal crowns, and his ceremonial procession throughout southeastern Europe in 1532 paired messianic claims to universal sovereignty with campaigns of conquest.¹³¹ By the same token, such claims were fed through the active and transcendent prognostications of prophets, such as Haydar-i Remmal and Mevlana 'İsa, whose shadowy work in and around the court drew upon the most potent elements of fifteenth-century messianic and apocalyptic discourses in the articulation of visions of a new age orchestrated by the Ottoman sovereign in his cosmically ordained role as messianic ruler.¹³² Such heady claims and visions contrast markedly with the more reserved and staid assertions of later decades. In these later formulations Süleyman emerges as juridically conceived caliph, as he does in a carefully constructed treatise of Lütfi Pasha or, more frequently, simply as sovereign of kings.¹³³ Both formulations appear to reflect the aging sultan's concern for the efficient and just administration of domains already under Ottoman control and a distancing from the most radical and potent elements of the claims to messianic sovereignty.

While it is likely that such a shift reflects accurately the evolving priorities of the sultan and his court, variegated ideological subcultures that advocated alternating or competing visions were equally pronounced throughout the long reign. In this manner, the competing arena of patronage or the existence of multiple bureaucratic subcultures observed in the reigns of Bayezid and Selim were equally in force during the reign of Süleyman. As in these earlier reigns, such subcultures are reflected in the content and form of provincial law codes. In the early reign of Süleyman, Ottoman administrators continued to survey and order the newly conquered lands of the former Mamluk Sultanate and, in this regard, the

¹³⁰ Cornell Fleischer, "Lawgiver as Messiah"; Gülru Necipoğlu, "A Kânûn for the State a Canon for the Arts: Conceptualizing the Classical Synthesis of Ottoman Art and Architecture," in *Soliman le Magnifique et son temps*, ed. Gilles Veinstein (Paris: Documentation Française, 1992), 194–216; Şahin, *Empire and Power*, 187–93; Atçıl, *Sultans and Scholars*, 123–33.

¹³¹ Necipoğlu, "Süleyman the Magnificent and the Representation of Power in the Context of the Ottoman-Habsburg-Papal Rivalry," *The Art Bulletin*, 71, 3 (1989): 407–9.

¹³² Fleischer, "Shadow of Shadows," 58–62; Fleischer, "Lawgiver as Messiah," 164–67; Fleischer, "A Mediterranean Apocalypse."

¹³³ Gibb, "Luṭfī Paşa on the Ottoman Caliphate."

mission in 1525 of the grand vizier İbrahim Pasha and the talented young secretary, Celalzade, to set right the affairs of Egypt after the rebellion of the Ottoman governor Ahmed Pasha constitute a continuation of Ottoman efforts to incorporate these new lands into the empire. And yet, the preface to the 1525 Law Code of Egypt has rightly been held up by historians in recent years as a watershed document that announced an era of greater self-confidence in the use of hyper-literate Turkish in the chancery and deployed confidently a new vocabulary of sovereignty.¹³⁴ Significantly, only the Egyptian Law Code includes such a lengthy, hyper-literate, and ideologically assertive preface – and, in this regard, appears to reflect most immediately the concerns and tastes of Celalzade, the ascendant young secretary behind it. Indeed, many other provincial law codes from the 1520s, as in previous reigns, contain no preface at all. It would seem then that in the early reign of Süleyman, as in the reign of Selim, the content and form of official documents was malleable and flexible in the hands of the individual administrators and secretaries who produced them.

Even in later decades, by which time a greater standardization of formulae was imposed upon the production of documents, provincial law codes still exhibited the idiosyncratic sensibilities of their administrative and secretarial authors. Consider, for example, the preface of the 1541 provincial Law Code of Buda penned by Ebu's-Su'ud in his capacity as Chief Military Judge of Rumelia.¹³⁵ While the scholar's inclusion of the title Caliph of the Messenger of God (*khalifat rasul rabb al-'alamin*) in the preface, with its careful adherence to the juridical formulations of scholars, may signal the more reserved and traditional approach to titlature consonant with the latter decades of Süleyman's reign, such a formulation may equally reflect Ebu's-Su'ud's particular orientation and sensibilities as a juridically minded administrator. In such a capacity, much like Kemalpasazade's preface for Karaman more than twenty years earlier, Ebu's-Su'ud eschewed the vicegerent of God, the more expansive formulation of the innovative new vocabulary, in favor of a juridically condoned turn of phrase. Also like Kemalpasazade, for Ebu's-Su'ud, the parameters of appropriate ideological claims were as much informed by the genre in which they were expressed. Elsewhere, Ebu's-Su'ud did embrace the

¹³⁴ Snjezana Buzov, "The Lawgiver and His Lawmakers: The Role of Legal Discourse in the Change of Ottoman Imperial Culture" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 2005), 29–45; Şahin, *Empire and Power*, 56–59.

¹³⁵ BOA, TTD 449, 2.

innovative new vocabulary – as he did for instance in an encomiastic celebration of Süleyman's status as *khalifat al-rahman* in the preface to a collection of religious opinions that he offered to the sultan – yet such a decision seems likely to be informed – at least partially – by what he viewed as appropriate to the genre in which he was writing.¹³⁶

For the first half of the sixteenth century – and likely much more generally – the identification and definition of a coherent image of the sultan by modern historians is complicated by two important factors suggested by the examples explored thus far in this chapter. The first concerns the appropriate locus of agency in the articulation of a sultan's image. Frequently, such agency is observed and articulated through the observed tastes, decisions, and policies of the sultan himself or a top statesman and patron, such as Süleyman's grand vizier, İbrahim Pasha. Yet, the varied, eclectic, and at times contradictory nature of the claims advanced in a single reign, or even at a single historical moment or by a single author, undermine our understanding of any sultan or his grand vizier as active and wholly conscious drivers of these ideological considerations. More pronounced appear the tastes and dispositions of discernible, and even distinct, bureaucratic subcultures, or perhaps even the idiosyncratic decisions and assertions of individual litterateurs, secretaries, or administrators. After all, the inclusion of a term like *sahib-qiran* in provincial law codes in Rumelia could hardly have been the active decision of Selim while he was at the very same time engaged in Egypt with the much weightier concern of how to defeat the last Mamluk sultan Tumanbay and bring the recently conquered country under some semblance of control.¹³⁷ More likely, the inclusion of this title in this document reflects the particular interests and concerns of the provincial administrators and secretaries who crafted these prefaces. How else can we explain the variations of language, literary register, and ideological complexity observed across similar types of documents produced contemporaneously? Second, the type of document or literary genre in which ideological claims or legitimating discourses were deployed mattered a great deal. Titles and concepts suitable to one document or discourse were not appropriate to another; in this manner, we may reconcile Khunji-Isfahani's

¹³⁶ Ebu's-Su'ūd, *Fatāwā*, SK Ms. 1051/6, 69b. I am grateful to Abdurrahman Atçıl for this reference.

¹³⁷ The Law Code states that it was prepared in the year of the conquest of Egypt and Syria, but the preface is dated Muharram 922 (February 1516), several months before the initial Ottoman confrontation with the Mamluk forces at Marj Dabiq, BOA, MAD 11, 2.

juristic opprobrium for association of the title *khalifat Allah* with any ruler, even as he deployed an analogous term in a different portion of the same work, albeit one with significantly different scholarly and literary constraints. By the same token, the varying attitudes of Ottoman scholars such as Kemalpasazade and Ebu's-Su'ud perhaps become more intelligible when we keep in mind the radically different genres in which they wrote.

In both these considerations, the training, sensitivities, and associations – professional and personal – of the formulators of any sultanic image are central to our understanding of what such an image meant and how it resonated. If the agency of secretaries and scholars mattered in the formulation and domestication of political concepts, then understanding something of the lived experience – personal, professional, and intellectual – is paramount. Such lived experience, especially inasmuch as it concerned intellectual precommitments, also affects how we approach an individual author's engagement with genre. It alerts us to the possibilities and limitations suggested by the distinct literary and scholarly tradition in which he worked.

Aspects of these two factors – the agency of secretaries and the parameters of genre – are also operable if we seek to assess Bidlisi's legacy upon the ideological dimensions of the sultanate in the reign of Süleyman. And again, the example of Shah Qasim and his work is well suited to explore how Bidlisi's ideas were internalized and transformed by a later generation. As we have seen in Chapter 5, Shah Qasim's upbringing and scholarly outlook shared many points in common with Bidlisi – both were from Tabriz and educated by their theosophically inclined fathers, both developed an interest in the expression of hyper-literate Persian prose, and both promoted the use of this style in an Ottoman context through the penning of historical works that deployed the Timurid vocabulary of sovereignty in defining the rule of Ottoman sultans. Beyond these parallels, along with Qazizada and Hakim Shah Muhammad Qazvini, they moved within the same Persian émigré network in Istanbul during the final years of Selim's reign.¹³⁸

Consideration of Shah Qasim's ideas on rule, while exhibiting undeniable consonance with Bidlisi's thinking, also suggests how in the first decades of Süleyman's reign the new vocabulary, especially in the form of historical writing, became fully domesticated in an Ottoman context as some encomiasts and writers began to bring into classic form the approach

¹³⁸ Âşık Çelebi, *Meşâ'irü's-Şu'arâ'*, 1498.

introduced by the preceding generation. Most telling, Shah Qasim's handling of rule presents a composite image of the sultan constructed equally from theosophical and philosophical doctrines, juridically condoned titles, and references to the cosmic role in the ordination of rulers. He describes the dual caliphate that had become such a prominent feature of political thought in the fifteenth century. Yet, in contrast to Bidlisi's oppositional Manichean formulation, his presentation embraces the more standard approach by differentiating the duality of vicegerency into spiritual and temporal classes of prophets and kings.¹³⁹ The Ottoman sultans, in consideration of their vast conquests, are distinguished in rule only after the four rightly guided caliphs.¹⁴⁰ Similarly, just as God has preferred some prophets above others through their status as founders of new religious dispensations (*mu'assisan-i shara'i-i jadida*), so He has distinguished some temporal rulers with world rule, which Shah Qasim equates with the rank of *sahib-qiran*. For Shah Qasim, all of the Ottoman sultans have been distinguished by this rank.¹⁴¹ As his forebears, Süleyman is also *sahib-qiran*, but by virtue of the coincidence of his birth at the dawn of the Hijri tenth century, he is also the centennial ruler, and elsewhere Shah Qasim asserts that the young sultan is Imam of the Muslims and Commander of the Faithful.¹⁴²

The list of titles and assertions may appear to present a confusing jumble of claims and references, but Shah Qasim also points to an underlying intellectual basis by which these titles and terms are conceptually equated. Most significantly, Süleyman possesses the four attributes of sultan and *sahib-qiran*, which he enumerates as justice (*'adalat*), courage (*shaja'at*), religiosity (*diyanat*), and generosity (*sakhavat*). Although the last two traits differ from the traditional four virtues of equipoise, Shah Qasim clarifies that religiosity and generosity are, in fact, the results of wisdom and restraint.¹⁴³ He substantiates his claims regarding Süleyman's unique status by pointing to the historical events from the young sultan's life and reign that embody each of the four characteristics.¹⁴⁴ Moreover, he selects ten qualities (*khassa*) from among the innumerable qualities of this sultan that indicate his cosmic and sacral sanction to rule.¹⁴⁵ Not

¹³⁹ Tabrīzī, *Kanz al-jawāhir*, 5b–6a.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 6b–7a.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 8a–8b.

¹⁴² Ibid., 9b.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 13a/b.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 13b–23b.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 23b–33b.

surprisingly, these qualities too draw upon esoteric understandings of the number ten, which correlates to Süleyman's status as the tenth Ottoman sultan, the *hadith* on centennial renewal, which anticipates Süleyman's birth in 901 AH, and the meaning of the *hadith*: The sultan is the shadow of God.

Undoubtedly, Shah Qasim's arguments and reasoning, in their basic form, do not represent anything new, even within an Ottoman context. Indeed, the structural parallels with Bidlisi's handling of the same topics leaves little doubt that Shah Qasim drew immediately upon *The Eight Paradises* for inspiration. Even so, the new contexts – of a young, recently enthroned sultan, of renewed efforts to expand Ottoman domains in Europe, and of a more general heightened Apocalyptic mood – informed the particular emphases and direction of Shah Qasim's thought. As Shah Qasim wrote contemporaneously with the other great chronicler of Süleyman's reign, Celalzade, the form and function of his historical work was likely informed equally by more immediate historiographical modes and discussions.

Even so, the considerable evolution and transformations in this new vocabulary of sovereignty from its point of origin in Timurid Iran to the middle decades of the sixteenth century suggests the vibrancy and durability of kingship defined in cosmic and sacral terms. As in earlier generations, for Shah Qasim, genre mattered enormously and historical writing still offered the most flexible and expansive canvas on which to depict an assertive and powerful image of the ruler in a new context.

Conclusion

Bidlisi, Shah Qasim Tabrizi, and the other Persian émigré secretaries introduced in these pages shared certain features of educational upbringing, professional experience, and political outlook that suggest their participation in a distinct bureaucratic subculture within the Ottoman court in the first decades of the sixteenth century. Their experiences as valued contributors to Ottoman chancery, administrative, and literary products were central to the trajectory of Ottoman imperial ideology at a critical juncture in the history of the sultanate. More generally, perhaps as a consequence of their insistence on Persian for the articulation of such ideology, these secretaries had a role in the emergence of a confident Ottoman imperial idiom that accepted the literary sensibilities of the Persian chancery style, even if ultimately it settled upon Ottoman Turkish as the principal language of refined communication and belles lettres. Their experiences are also key to approaching again the question first raised at the beginning of this book: Wherefrom did the widespread and novel discourse on sacral and cosmic kingship of the sixteenth century originate and how did it come to be a common feature of kingship among the major Muslim empires of the sixteenth century?

The roots of this discourse can be traced to Timurid Iran in the early fifteenth century, where a novel vocabulary of sovereignty was first formulated as an expansive expression of kingship partly in response to a more general assault on the prevailing political order. Indeed, Bidlisi and his émigré colleagues all had lived experience of the political, intellectual, and religious ferment precipitated by this assault since its effects ranged widely across the century. In the case of Bidlisi, such experience originated

from the circumstances of his birth in 1457 beside the aging Muhammad Nurbakhsh, a Sufi master and messianic figure whose spiritual and political vision had offered a radical and threatening alternative to the Timurid regime in the early 1420s. From his early education, Bidlisi grappled with the theosophical thought and Sufi cosmological positions that underpinned Nurbakhsh's messianic challenge. This specific challenge, as well as several other social and religious movements, crystalized a more general crisis of kingship in Islamic lands during this period. Nurbakhsh's spiritual claims threatened the prevailing order, in part, because rulers lacked a legitimate basis for universal political authority. In previous centuries, such authority was articulated in relation to the juridically conceived Abbasid Caliphate. Between the mid-thirteenth and mid-fourteenth centuries, the prestige of Chinggis Khan and his descendants exercised an equally compelling call for universal rule among the Turco-Mongol military elite that dominated the central lands of Islam. In the decades before Bidlisi's birth, Timurid courts and the scholars, secretaries, and historians most closely linked with them experimented with and gradually developed a conception of kingship that sought to offer an alternative basis for rule. The resulting ideology and much of its underlying scholarly basis rested upon older traditions, especially astrological, philosophical, and theosophical, that were marshaled and deployed to new effect in political discourses that emphasized Timur's conquests and the subsequent rule of his descendants as cosmic and sacral signs of divine favor and a mandate for universal rule.

In parallel with these ideological challenges and frequently bound up with them, rulers in the fifteenth century continued to grapple with the more fundamental challenge of preserving and expanding effective governance. This administrative challenge largely derived from the basic socioeconomic dynamics that underpinned political life in the fifteenth century. For even as rulers sought to conceive of an expansive universalizing framework for kingship, they still necessarily relied upon the support of key constituencies from the military-administrative and learned-religious classes. This basic relationship held true across a wide expanse and frequently produced similar sultanic responses. Rulers routinely offered special privileges and exemptions to these constituencies through the bestowal of state lands as tax exempt private property, which, in turn, were often completely alienated from the state through the establishment of pious endowments. In this manner, the extension of these privileges also had the effect of reducing sultanic sources of revenue during a period in which courts simultaneously worked to centralize government and expand their resources. The tension produced by these processes resulted

in several acute crises between 1469 and 1496 that affected all of the major sultanates of West Asia. In all cases, sultans or their key administrators sought to reclaim these lost sources of revenue through reforms that targeted the exemptions and privileges of these groups. In all cases too, these initiatives faced considerable resistance and failed. Here too, in his capacity as state secretary for the Aqqyunlu Sultanate, Bidlisi was a close observer of these policies and reforms. For both proponents of sultanic reforms like Bidlisi and their opponents, just governance through the *shari'a* constituted a major rhetorical focal point. Any expansive, universalizing conception of rule, even if grounded in cosmic or sacral terms, needed therefore to address equally this vision of how just governance should be construed.

In both ideological and administrative terms, scholar-secretaries like Bidlisi were key witnesses to these processes and well positioned through their scholarly training, literary activities, and official responsibilities to articulate and advance a response, whether as political prescription or ideological assertion. In these responses, the closely linked activities of the chancery secretary and historian helped shape the parameters of these responses and contributed to the acceptance and domestication of their central concerns among courts across Islamic lands. During the fifteenth century, history writing emerged, especially in Persian, as a rigorous form of knowledge, a science well suited to exploring and articulating expressions of sovereignty and the ideals of governance. This was because its focus on the didactic narratives of kings and its openness to discursive speculation rendered it the ideal literary and learned genre for experimentation in political thought. Indeed, its malleability as a learned and literary form permitted the introduction and melding of varied epistemological positions – especially, but not solely astrological, philosophical, and theosophical – into political discourse and the expression of comprehensive and unified conceptions of rule.

For this reason then, historical writing in this period frequently deployed together concepts and terminology that were first developed in isolation within distinct discourses. Through historical writing, the *sahib-qiran* of panegyrist poets and astrologers, the *mujaddid* of religious scholars, and the *khaliifa-yi ilahi* of theosophical Sufis became intertwined within a wide-ranging discourse, which, in fundamental terms, sought to legitimize the rule of sultans with reference to the cosmic and divine favor shown a single individual. Indeed, this intertwining of epistemological positions is entirely evident in Bidlisi's handling of *khilafat-i rahmani* in his historical writing and demonstrates the suitability of this literary form

for melding varied discourses. In this handling, the nature of kingship derived from theosophical conceptions of the role of humankind in the cosmic order and the potentiality of the individual to become the vicegerent of God in His Creation. In this manner, it posited the centrality of divine grace to vicegerency, and by extension kingship. Although such a discourse was conceived in spiritual terms, the political implications of this rendering were clear to fifteenth-century political thinkers. For many writers during this period, including Bidlisi, the outward expression of this vicegerency was rooted in philosophical understandings of ethical comportment embodied most succinctly through the state of equipoise, that is to say an individual's possession of the four cardinal virtues. Yet, this theosophical essence and philosophical substance of kingship remained largely descriptive. Its implications were articulated within the narratives of historical writing and the chancery documents frequently produced along similar lines. Such implications generally focused upon defining and defending the purpose of this vicegerency as the establishment and maintenance of just governance through the *shari'a*. Through the efforts of historians and the more quotidian work of secretaries, such a view was encapsulated and promoted in a discernible vocabulary of sovereignty that emphasized the cosmic and sacral bases of legitimacy as first articulated in Timurid courts, yet also described the political implications of such a vision in relatively concrete terms.

Bidlisi and the other emigres were exposed to elements of the Timurid vocabulary of sovereignty as young men in their homeland in western Iran. Through work for the Aqqyunlu or the Safavids in the case of Shah Qasim, these scholars and functionaries deployed this vocabulary in official documents, treatises, and historical literary works. As a consequence of political turmoil and war in Iran, the émigrés all wound up at the Ottoman court, where they reused these titles and concepts in new contexts in their capacities as courtiers and secretaries. In this sense, Bidlisi and his colleagues carried with them the impact of Timur's conquests and the subsequent instability of political authority in the fifteenth century. In their work for the Ottomans, they deployed this education, experience, and outlook in the interest of responding to equally monumental transformations of the early sixteenth century: the rise and consolidation of the messianic rule of Shah Isma'il in Iran and the Ottoman eastward conquests of western Iran, Syria, Egypt, and the Hijaz.

There is little doubt that these monumental transformations grew out of the sociopolitical and religious ferment of the late fifteenth century. Notwithstanding these transformations, both the underlying challenges of

governance and the possibilities of expansive kingship remained largely constant. Such possibilities were reflected clearly, for instance, in Bidlisi's poetic overtures to Shah Isma'il in 1511, through which he asserted Isma'il's recent victory over Shibani Khan as a sign of Isma'il's preeminence as spiritual and temporal ruler. More generally, Selim and his administrators wrestled with these challenges and possibilities in the immediate wake of Ottoman conquests in the 1510s in Kurdistan, Syria, and Egypt. In all these lands, the nascent Ottoman administration, to which Bidlisi uniquely contributed, sought to recruit through concessions and ideological assertions key local constituencies, whether Kurdish lords or learned urban notables, who might aid and support Ottoman rule. Here too, the new vocabulary of sovereignty figured both in the articulation of an Ottoman governing outlook to wider populations through sermons and in justification of these conquests to other Muslim polities through victory proclamations. Even so, the more basic business of implementing a just order remained central, yet somewhat elusive. It is perhaps not surprising therefore that Bidlisi expressed his great frustration during Selim's reign in terms of Ottoman failures to realize what he envisioned as just governance in these newly conquered lands.

Nevertheless, the imprint of his vision remained a discernible, yet evolving aspect of Ottoman imperial ideology well into the sixteenth century. As we have seen in the work of Bidlisi in the Aqqyunlu and Ottoman contexts, as well as in the work of provincial Ottoman secretaries in the early decades of the sixteenth century, the precise terminology adapted from Aqqyunlu and Timurid precedents did not remain fixed and stable. Over time, the Ottoman scholars and secretaries who inherited the Timurid vocabulary adapted and amended it in response to more immediate political concerns, as a consequence of the formation and production of distinct bureaucratic subcultures, and in keeping with the expectations of the specific, literary, scholarly, and documentary genres in which they worked. Such expectations certainly were molded by the complex patronage environments and personal and professional affiliations that made literary and scholarly works possible. In these senses, the adaptation of the Timurid vocabulary of sovereignty to Ottoman ideological discourses and the quotidian technologies of governance were dependent primarily upon more localized, even individual concerns and tastes. In this manner we have been led to focus not on sultans or their viziers but on the varied, often basic work of litterateurs and secretaries, through whose frequently independent exercise of learned and aesthetic judgment ideological positions assumed concrete forms in courtly circles

and official settings. Such a notion is certainly in keeping with a conception of political culture “shot through” by the messy business of contradiction, change, and the constantly uncertain outcome of human interaction. As a consequence, we have been concerned to immerse ourselves in those individual contexts and observe the possibilities and limitations of localized activity as it bears upon the broader question of Ottoman political culture during a period of transformation.

In the experiences of Bidlisi, we may therefore register clearly the possibilities and limitations of such activity. Bidlisi offered in his writings complex ideas about kingship that can be traced back to the political, intellectual, and religious context of a particular time and place, specifically Timurid Iran in the fifteenth century. In this time and place, certain broader religious currents and cultural orientations shaped the parameters and possibilities in which Bidlisi and his colleagues worked and in this manner informed the content and form of his writings on history, politics, and kingship. As a corollary to this observation, these ideas are bound up closely with the literary register in which he expressed them and the reception of his ideas was, therefore, contingent upon the acceptance of his literary sensibilities by his audience. Similarly, the influence of his ideas was dependent upon the political circumstances in which Bidlisi found himself, and upon the readiness of subsequent writers to rework or redeploy his vision. Consequently, their survival was not necessarily guaranteed, even if in his lifetime we may discern an impact on Ottoman political culture. Indeed, even in his own day and in the longer term, his particular ideas were fragile and in competition with other ideological positions. Focus, therefore, on Bidlisi’s life and work exposes us to the contingency, rather than inevitability of Ottoman imperial formation in the early sixteenth century.

Equally, this book has been concerned with approaching Ottoman history with a very wide angle lens that examines Ottoman political, cultural, and intellectual developments firmly within the parameters of a broader Islamic cultural complex. To be sure, modern scholars affirm Ottoman participation in a wider Islamicate cultural complex both with respect to political thought and historical writing. Even so, when the trajectories of these intellectual traditions are studied within an Ottoman context, their narrower *Rumi* quality predominates. In this regard, the Balkan or Anatolian context or literary and intellectual output in Turkish remain the focus of attention, even as wider cultural geographies or Arabic and Persian works are acknowledged as relevant. As a consequence, political thinkers or historians such as Bidlisi are often domesticated and

subsumed within an Ottoman cultural landscape, even if in life experience, manner, outlook, language, aesthetic sensibility, and confessional fluidity such authors appear entirely alien from the distinct Rumi cultural mold that was concurrently emerging in the sixteenth century. Yet as Bidlisi's life experiences demonstrate, such a Rumi cultural mold was only taking its first tentative steps during these years. Bidlisi remained ineradicably Persian, yet with the Ottomans he shared much since his religious learning with its emphasis on theosophical Sufism, professional training within prestigious Iranian chanceries, and literary skill with Persian *belles lettres* were all highly valued by the Ottoman court in his lifetime. In this manner, study of Bidlisi affords a view to the equally palpable centrifugal tensions that were also a feature of this cultural complex.

In tracing and exploring the scholarly, intellectual, and professional precommitments of Bidlisi and his like-minded contemporaries, this book has ranged widely by taking into consideration ornate histories produced in North India, messianic figures active in Iran, and intellectual debates on the meaning of history that unfolded between Cairo and Herat. What we have seen in doing so is that Ottoman political culture, although developing the distinct lines asserted by modern historians nonetheless connected meaningfully, productively, and profoundly with a much wider world. In this sense, Bidlisi and an examination of his life and compatriots has offered a connected history of political ideology. In so far as these connections are discernible in the writings, itineraries, and relationships of our principal subjects, such a connected history eschews an amorphous climate of ideas and insists upon examination of these connections in their fullest spatial and temporal dimensions.

Appendix A

Chronology of Idris Bidlisi's Life

- 1457 Idris' birth on January 18 in the settlement of the messianic Sufi Muhammad Nurbakhsh at Suliqan in northern Iran
- 1464 Death of Muhammad Nurbakhsh on November 14
- 1465 Bidlisi's father Husam al-Din 'Ali returns his family to its ancestral home in Bidlis under the protection of the Ruzhaki Kurdish lord Amir Sharaf
- 1467 The Qaraqyunlu ruler Jahanshah invades Aqqyunlu territories in Armenia in May
- 1467 The Aqqyunlu ruler Uzun Hasan defeats Jahanshah at Mush on November 10; Bidlisi and his father are in the retinue of the Qaraqyunlu rulers at the time of this battle; Husam al-Din 'Ali joins the retinue of Uzun Hasan
- 1469 Uzun Hasan defeats the Timurid ruler Sultan-Abu Sa'id at Qarabagh in January; Uzun Hasan emerges as preeminent ruler in Iran
- 1471 Bidlisi begins study of Sufism under the supervision of his father
- 1473 Uzun Hasan is defeated by the Ottoman sultan Mehmed II at the battle of Otlukbeli (Başkent) in August; shortly thereafter, Bidlisi meets Jami as the eminent scholar passes through Tabriz on his return home to Herat from pilgrimage
- 1478 Death of Uzun Hasan; Aqqyunlu succession struggle
- 1478 Uzun Hasan's son Sultan-Khalil emerges victorious in July and begins his eight-month reign

- 1479 With the support of key power brokers, Sultan-Khalil's brother, Ya'qub, defeats and kills Sultan-Khalil; Ya'qub is proclaimed ruler from Tabriz
- 1480 Bidlisi dedicates *Springtime of the Innocent* to Ya'qub; enters sultanic service within Aqqyunlu court
- 1480–90 With the patronage and support of Ya'qub's powerful minister Qazi 'Isa, Bidlisi ascends within the ranks of the Aqqyunlu chancery and attains the rank of state secretary (*munshi al-mamalik*)
- 1481 Bidlisi is appointed to compose the Aqqyunlu victory proclamation (*fathnama*) in commemoration of the defeat of the rebellious commander Bayandur
- 1484 Bidlisi composes official Aqqyunlu letter to the Timurid sultan Sultan-Husayn Bayqara; composes reply to Ottoman victory proclamation in the wake of the capture of Aqkirman and Kili.
- 1489 Qazi 'Isa initiates land tax reforms in 'Iraq-i 'Ajam; these efforts are met with stiff resistance by segments of the scholarly class and possibly contribute to Qazi 'Isa's murder in the wake of Ya'qub's death in December
- 1490–92 Civil war following death of Ya'qub; during the latter part of this period, Bidlisi resides in Shiraz, where he studies with Jalal al-Din Davani
- 1492 Enthronement of Rustam in Tabriz in May
- 1497 Rustam's cousin, Ahmad ibn Ughurlu Muhammad, returns to Iran from Ottoman lands to contest the throne; with the encouragement of the military and civilian elite, including Bidlisi, and the support of the Ottomans, Ahmad defeats Rustam and is declared the emperor of Persia from Tabriz; Sultan Ahmad initiates reforms in line with Qazi 'Isa's efforts nearly ten years earlier; meets stiff resistance and is defeated and killed near Isfahan in December 1497; Bidlisi cites this date as the end of Aqqyunlu rule; period of chaos and civil war ensues
- 1501 Shah Isma'il defeats the Aqqyunlu prince Alvand at Sharur outside Tabriz; seizes Tabriz and proclaims himself emperor of Iran
- 1502 In the midst of political upheaval, famine, and plague, Bidlisi emigrates from Tabriz and heads to Ottoman lands

- 1502 Bidlisi settles in Sofia in the Ottoman Balkans where he completes several works dedicated to the Ottoman sultan Bayezid II and his son Ahmed; begins working on his history of the Ottoman dynasty (*The Eight Paradises*)
- 1502–11 Bidlisi enjoys the patronage of Sultan Bayezid II and composes several works dedicated to the Ottoman sultan; in the latter portion of this period, Bidlisi feels his talents and efforts are insufficiently rewarded and points to the jealousy of some of Bayezid's leading statesmen as the cause for his marginalization at court
- 1506 Bidlisi presents a copy of *The Eight Paradises* in May and receives a reward of 50,000 silver aspers
- 1506–7 Bidlisi composes a panegyric poem in honor of Sultan Bayezid II's son Selim
- 1511 Feeling marginalized at the Ottoman court, Bidlisi departs for pilgrimage to Mecca; passes through Cairo where he is received by the Mamluk sultan Qansawh al-Ghawri; sends a panegyric poem to Shah Isma'il around this time, perhaps as an overture for repatriation in Iran; settles in the Hijaz where he works on the introduction to *The Eight Paradises*
- 1512 Selim accedes to the Ottoman throne and invites Bidlisi to return to Ottoman lands; Bidlisi accepts; begins his journey back to Istanbul
- 1513 Bidlisi completes the verse conclusion to *The Eight Paradises* and presents the work to Selim; in the following years, Bidlisi will assume a role as an important adviser to Selim, especially on the Ottoman campaigns in western Iran
- 1514 Bidlisi accompanies Selim and the Ottoman army on its campaign against Shah Isma'il in Iran; Shah Isma'il is resoundingly defeated at Chaldiran in August, but escapes capture
- 1514–16 Bidlisi is sent by Selim to Kurdistan where he endeavors to enlist the support of the Kurdish lords for the Ottoman struggle against Shah Isma'il; the mission culminates in a campaign of joint Ottoman-Kurdish forces that expels Shah Isma'il's forces from Diyarbakr
- 1516 Selim orders Bidlisi to join the main Ottoman army, which had recently defeated the Mamluks under the command of Sultan Qansawh al-Ghawri outside of Aleppo

- 1517 Bidlisi accompanies Selim on his campaign against the newly appointed Mamluk sultan Tumanbay in Egypt; Ottoman conquest of Egypt; Bidlisi quarrels with some of Selim's leading statesmen regarding the administration of the newly conquered lands and is sent back to Istanbul
- 1520 Bidlisi dies on November 18 in Istanbul in the midst of composing a history of Selim's reign, which became known as the *Salimshahnama* (*The History of Selim*)

Appendix B

Works of Idris Bidlisi

Manuscripts with Bidlisi's hand are indicated with an asterisk (*), while manuscripts copied by Mehmed ibn Bilal are signified with a cross (†). Most of the manuscript copies of *The Eight Paradises* (*Hasht bihisht*) are incomplete. Wherever possible, the list indicates what portions of the work are included in each manuscript: introduction (M), the various books on each reign (Roman numerals I–VIII), and conclusion (Kh). Wherever possible, the copy dates of the manuscripts are included parenthetically with Hijri and Common Era dates. For discussion of works misattributed to Bidlisi, see Markiewicz, "The Crisis of Rule," 418–20.

I WORKS IN PERSIAN

1 *Hasht bihisht* (911, 919 / 1506, 1513–1514)

- (1) MS. Esad Efendi 2198, SK, Istanbul (VII–VIII).*
- (2) MS. Esad Efendi 2199, SK, Istanbul (I–VI).*
- (3) MS. Ayasofya 3538, SK, Istanbul (VIII).
- (4) MS. Ayasofya 3542, SK, Istanbul (I–V).
- (5) MS. Esad Efendi 2197, SK, Istanbul (M, I–VIII, Kh, copied in 919/1513).*
- (6) MS. Ayasofya 3541, SK, Istanbul (M, I–VI, M copied in 918/1512. I–VI copied before 926/1520).*
- (7) MS. no. 3209, Nuruosmaniye Kütüphanesi, Istanbul (M, I–VIII, Kh, copied 919/1513).*
- (8) MS. Hazine 1655, Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi, Istanbul (M, I–VIII, Kh, copied 919/1513).

- (9) MS. 3212 Nuruosmaniye Kütüphanesi, Istanbul (VII–VIII, Kh, copied before 926/1520).*
- (10) MS. III. Ahmed 2914 (M, I–VIII, Kh, likely copied in tenth/sixteenth century).
- (11) MS. Revan 1514, TSMK, Istanbul (M, I–VI).
- (12) MS. Revan 1515/1, TSMK, Istanbul (I–VI, copied 963–964/1556–1557).
- (13) MS. Revan 1515/2, TSMK, Istanbul (most of VIII).
- (14) MS. Revan 1516, Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi, Istanbul (I–VII, copied 919/1513).
- (15) MS. Ayasofya 3539, SK, Istanbul (I).
- (16) MS. Ayasofya 3540, SK, Istanbul (I–III).
- (17) MS. Ayasofya 3543, SK, Istanbul (IV–VI).
- (18) MS. Halet Efendi İlavesi 191/1, SK, Istanbul (M, I–III, VII–VIII, copied in 976/1568–1569).†
- (19) MS. Halet Efendi İlavesi 191/2, SK, Istanbul (VIII, Kh).
- (20) MS. Lala İsmail Efendi 379, SK, Istanbul (narrative portions of VII).
- (21) MS. no. 3082 Nuruosmaniye Kütüphanesi, Istanbul (M, I–IV).
- (22) MS. no. 3210, Nuruosmaniye Kütüphanesi, Istanbul (II–V).
- (23) MS. FY. 225, İstanbul Nadir Eserler Kütüphanesi, Istanbul (I–V).
- (24) MS. FY. 226, İstanbul Nadir Eserler Kütüphanesi, Istanbul (VIII, Kh).
- (25) MS. FY. 550, İstanbul Nadir Eserler Kütüphanesi, Istanbul (narrative portions of VII).
- (26) MS. FY. 619, İstanbul Nadir Eserler Kütüphanesi, Istanbul (M, I–VIII, Kh, copied in 967–968/1560–1561, formerly Halis Efendi 3364).†
- (27) MS. FY. 769, İstanbul Nadir Eserler Kütüphanesi, Istanbul (narrative portions of VII).
- (28) MS. Beyazıt 5161, Beyazıt Devlet Kütüphanesi, Istanbul (narrative portions of VII).
- (29) MS. 1946, Atıf Efendi Kütüphanesi, Istanbul (M, I–VIII).
- (30) MS. 1947, Atıf Efendi Kütüphanesi, Istanbul (VI–VII).
- (31) MS. 1948, Atıf Efendi Kütüphanesi, Istanbul (narrative portions of VII).
- (32) MS. Ali Emiri Farsi 800–7, Millet Kütüphanesi, Istanbul (M, I–VIII, Kh in eight volumes copied in 1114/1702).

- (33) MS. 1636, Kitābkhāna-yi Madrasa-yi 'Ālī-yi Sipahsālār, Tehran (possibly tenth century).
- (34) MS. 11, Dānishgāh-i Adabiyāt-i Tabrīz, Tabriz (copied in 968/1560).†
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nr. 2200

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İnamat Defteri, Muallım Cevdet O. 71

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Christopher Markiewicz is Lecturer in Ottoman and Islamic History at the University of Birmingham. He was the Bennett Boskey Fellow in Extra-European History at Exeter College, Oxford between 2015 and 2017. In recognition of his research, he was awarded the Malcolm H. Kerr Dissertation Award by the Middle East Studies Association in 2016.

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ISBN 978-1-108-49214-0



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